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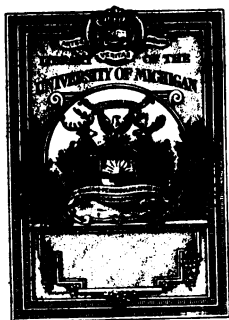
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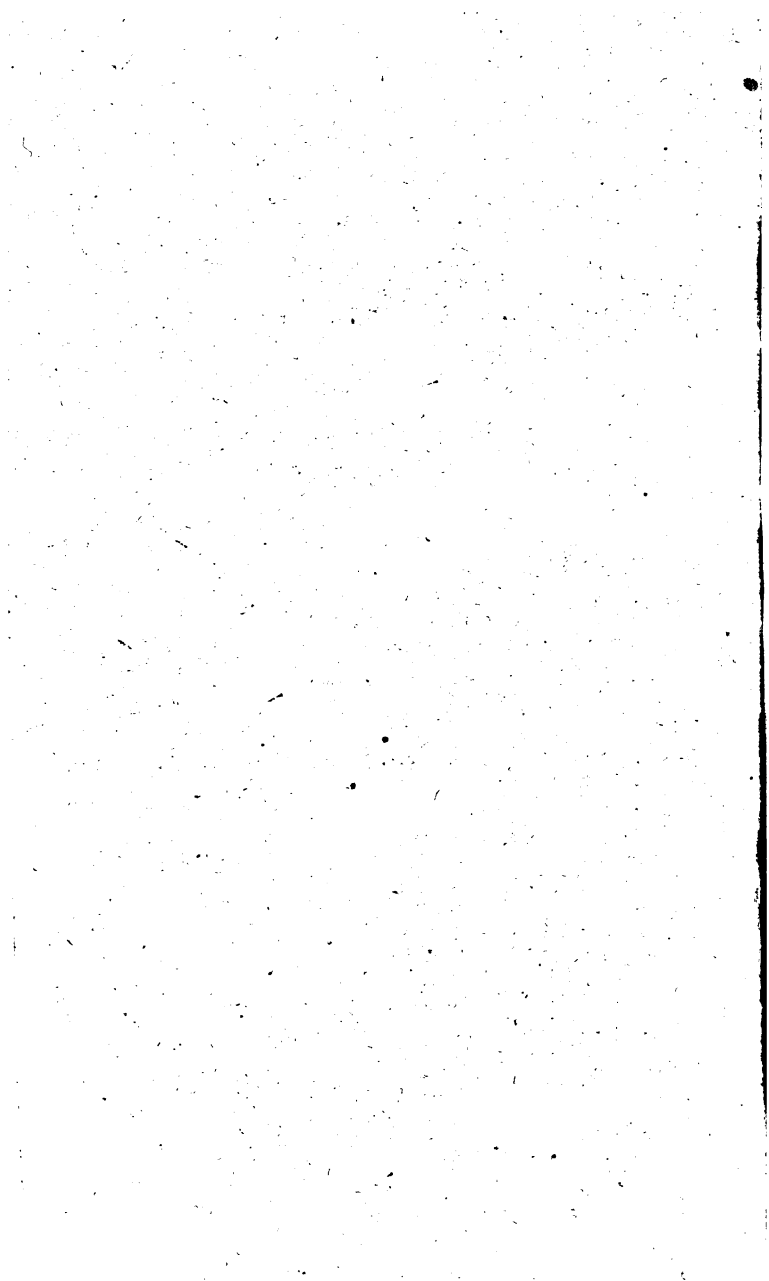
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A GIRTON GIRL.

BY

MRS. ANNIE EDWARDS.

"O Women, Women! O our frail, frail sex!
No wonder tragedies are made from us.
Always the same: nothing but loves and cradles."
The Revolt of the Women (ARISTOPHANES).

NEW YORK:
GEORGE MUNRO, PUBLISHER,

17 TO 27 VANDEWATER STREET.

1885

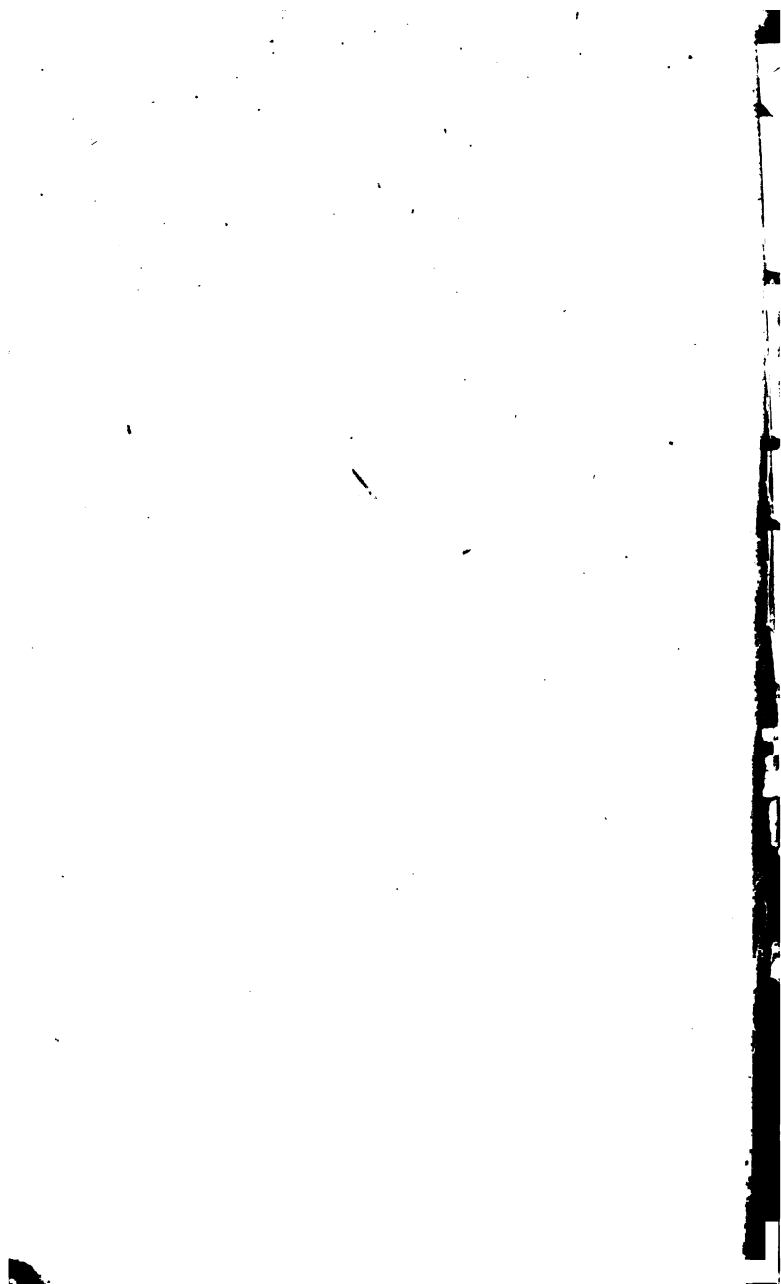
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A GIRTON GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

TRIANGULAR FRIENDSHIP.

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"THE foundations of Newnham and of Girton may be deep," observed Gaston Arbuthnot, in his pleasant, level, semi-American voice. "The foundations of the Gogmagog Hills are deeper! Girl wranglers may come, girl optimists may go. The heart of woman remains unchanged. And the heart of woman—"

But a plate piled with luscious Guernsey strawberries happening to be placed, by a jaunty Norman waitress, under Gaston's nose, the generalization, for the moment, ended abruptly.

Guernsey. Imagine that dot of granite washed round by such blue as our western channel shows in June, imagine carnation-smelling sunshine, a friendly trio of young persons breakfasting, with appetite, on the lime-shaded lawn of Miller's Sarnian Hotel; imagine the flutter of a muslin dress, the presence of a beautiful girl of two-and-twenty, and the opening scene of this little drama lies before you.

I may add that the friendship of the three persons was a paradox, as the reader of the succeeding pages shall be brought to see.

"The heart of woman tends toward marriage. Well, a picturesque revival of Lady-Jane-Grayism," went on Gaston Arbuthnot, as his plate of strawberries subsided, "may be safe enough—to the Lady Jane Greys! Especially in an age when women, young or old, are by no means given to losing their heads. But let the Roger Aschams who bear them company look to it! This young person whom you, Geoffrey, propose to coach is probably neither worse nor better than her sisters. The man-hating story I flatly disbelieve. Marjorie Bartrand may or may not go to Girton. She is sure to prove herself a very woman in the end."

"Unfortunately, you flatly disbelieve so many things." As she spoke, Gaston's wife transferred a monster strawberry from her own plate to her husband's. "You told me, only yesterday—"

"Dinah, my love," interrupted Gaston, with good humor, "never remind a man who has well dined or well breakfasted of what he said yesterday. In what state were one's nerves twenty-four hours ago? Was the wind in the east? Had our perennial duns arrived from England? Had our cousin Geoffrey been reading pauper statistics at us? Each or all of these accidents may have engendered skepticism which at this moment is replaced by the child-like faith born of idleness and a fine digestion."

And Dinah's strawberry, incrustated by sugar, delicately dipped in Guernsey cream, was placed between Gaston's white teeth, savored and swallowed.

It was not part of Mr. Arbuthnot's philosophy to refuse any little choice morsel that the world, artistic, intellectual, or physical, though fit to offer him.

He was a handsome man verging on his thirtieth year; tawny-bearded, fair, with hands that Titian or Velasquez might have loved to paint, and a profile of the type commonly known as Bourbon. (Although he may not play the first part in this or any other drama, one has a feeling that Gaston should advance to the footlights, make his bow, a good minute before his fellow-actors leave the slips.) His eyes were shrewd and near together, their color and their expression alike prone to shift if a stranger sought, too persistently, to investigate them.

With a first look you felt sure that Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot bore a brain. You felt equally sure, with a second, that the opinion was shared, even to exaggeration, by Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot himself.

In dress, it was his pleasure to affect Bohemianism. On this particular June morning Gaston wore a brown velvet coat, a spun silk shirt, a white sombrero hat, the well tailored man becoming only more conspicuous under the disguise. What smaller things shall be said of him? That he had been brought up as a child in Paris, the only son of a valetudinarian American widow, and spoke French to this hour with a better accent than English, rolling his "r's" and clipping his vowels like a born denizen of the boulevards. Item: that he had a fair English girl for his wife; item: a loyal, rough-hewn Scottish cousin for his friend—the Dinah and Geoffrey who, breakfasting with appetite although their discourse was of sentiment, made up the paradoxical little group under the lime-trees at which we have glanced.

Let us turn to Geoffrey next, leaving Dinah, as I see they leave the first actress in the theatrical advertisements, for the bottom of the list.

The cousinship of the Arbuthnots might be divined at a glance, although, reviewed feature by feature, the two men were notably unlike in their likeness. Both were tall, both were wiry of build, both held their heads high, going along life's road as though the world, taken from whichever point of view you liked, were decidedly a place worth living in. Here the likeness ended. Gaston, indeed, would declare that by virtue of his mother's Yankee blood, and his own Parisian instincts, they were less related, physically, than any ordinary cousins-german.

One overwhelming difference between them was patent. Geoffrey was no beauty-man! When he was the freshest of freshmen, five or six years before the morning of this Guernsey breakfast, Geff went in, one November night, for a little bit of guerilla fighting in the Cambridge streets, which, without quenching the guerilla spirit, effectually left a beauty-spoiling brand upon himself for the remainder of his life.

It happened thus. Geoffrey, raw from school, had newly carried off one of the scholarships best worth winning in the university. Although brave, manly, impetuous, the lad's hours were early, his habits sober. He belonged, indeed, to a class which young gentlemen, fond of their pleasure, and of modest mental gifts, are apt to label during their first two terms of residence under the generic name of smug. Well, with an old schoolmate, less versed in Greek than himself, Geff had been drinking coffee and conning over such portions of Plato as would be wanted by his friend for the coming Little Go. He was midway on his way back to his scholar's attic in John's when, turning sharply round a corner of Petty Cury, he found himself in the thick of a small but classic "town and gown." A brace of undergraduates, raw as himself, held a mob of roughs at bay; stones, oaths, and brickbats flew about with Homeric profusion. A fine Cambridge drizzle gave atmosphere to the scene. Police, bull-dogs, proctors, were beneath the horizon.

With no other weapons than his fists and his Plato, Geff rushed to the fore. In those early days he had neither the weight nor the staying power which on many a well-contested football field have since made his name a terror to the foe and a tower of strength to all England. He had, however, the force born of will, of brain, of generous impulse. Ere twenty seconds had sped, Plato, with all the Platonic philosophy, went to the winds, and the biggest, brawniest of the roughs, stoutly gripped about the neck-cloth region, gave tokens of surrender.

Unfortunately for Geoff's beauty, his antagonist's left hand held a broken stone bottle. As the ruffian felt himself reel to earth, he swung the missile, with dastard might, into the Scotch lad's face, cutting his nose and forehead very literally to the bone. There came a cry of "Proctor!" There was the shuffle of departing feet. Then Geoffrey, blinded, stunned, fell into a bull-dog's arms and heard the usual proctorial question as to name and college, addressed with the usual calm proctorial courtesy to himself.

It was a week before the Little Go exams.; and Geoffrey Arbuthnot, as soon as the surgeons could strap his face into a grim resemblance of humanity, went down.

The incident in nowise lessened his Cambridge reputation. Though he eventually came out eighth in the Classical Tripos, it is not known that the most foolish tongue called Arbuthnot of John's a smug again; tacitly, he was recognized, even by pleasure-loving young gentlemen, as one of that queer "good-all-round sort" in whom the defects of bookishness and staid living are condoned by certain sterling natural virtues—glorious muscle, unconquerable pluck. "Virtues that a man can't help, don't you know, if they are born in him!" And which, confusing to the pleasure-loving intelligence though such facts may be, do certainly, in the long run, bring public credit to the Alma Mater.

But the blow from his street antagonist had marred Geoffrey Arbuthnot's looks for life.

Strength, loyalty, gentleness were written large upon his face. His dark, somewhat sunken eyes had in them the glow of an intellect high above the level of his handsome cousin! His smile, though Geoff did not resemble the family of Bourbon, was finer, because sweeter, more wholly human than Gaston's. But his looks were marred. That rugged cicatrice across nose and forehead could never wear out, and Geoffrey possessed not the thousand little drawing-room graces that, in some women's sight, might go far toward rendering such a blemish "interesting." His hands, however firm, lithe, adequate for a surgeon's work, did neither suggest Titian nor Velasquez to your mental eye. His dress bespoke the student. His French was grotesque. Although a second Bayard in his reverence for abstract woman, he had no small attentions for concrete idle ladies.

Garden-parties Geoffrey Arbuthnot evaded; dancing-parties he abhorred. In regard to matrimony he would shake his head, not holding it a state meet for all men.

Concerning this latest clause, however, the reader shall learn

more when we come to ask why the triangular friendship of the persons breakfasting together under the shadow of Mr. Miller's limes was paradoxical.

"Yes," resumed Gaston Arbuthnot, tilting himself to the outside limit of equilibrium on his garden chair, and clasping his arms, with a gesture admirably suggestive of habitual laziness, above his head, "look the position in the face for one moment, and you reduce it to an absurdity. No girl of seventeen has ever yet been a man-hater; has she, Dinah?"

"I was not," admitted Mrs. Arbuthnot frankly, although she blushed. "But Miss. Bartrand of Tintajoux, young though she is, has gone through disappointment. Mrs. Miller told me so when I showed her the paper with the advertisement. Miss Bartrand, more than a year ago, was engaged to the major of some English regiment stationed in Guernsey."

"Is that a disappointment, my love?"

"The major of the regiment proved a sorry character," said Dinah gravely. "Miss Bartrand found out that he had broken the heart of some poor girl at a former garrison town."

"And, from that hour forth, swore to look on all men as in the conspiracy," interrupted Gaston. "What breadth of discrimination, what knowledge of the world, these simple-seeming school-girls occasionally show!"

"When I was eighteen, that spring I went to stay with Aunt Susan at Lesser Cheriton, I knew no more of the world's ways than a baby, did I, Geoff?"

"The philosophers are divided as to how much a baby does know," answered Geoffrey, fixing his dark eyes with discrimination upon Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot's face.

"There is an unexpected parry for you, my dear girl." Shifting his chair away from the table, Dinah's lord began to fold himself a loose, or Spanish-modeled cigarette. Pipes and cigars of ordinary goodness Gaston would no more smoke than he would swallow any of the popular fluids known among Britons as wine. He had the virtue of facile temperance, wore the blue ribbons of a fastidious taste. Unless his small luxuries were of the choicest, he could at any time fill the anchorite's rôle without effort. "You had better apply to your own lawful husband, Dinah, than to Geoff, when you want a compliment."

"I apply to Geoffrey when I want truth."

Dinah made this answer, unconscious of the slight irony her speech conveyed.

"The truth! When a pretty woman talks of truth," cried Gaston, "she means, 'Give me the biggest, most sugared lump of praise that my moral gullet will enable me to swallow.'"

Mrs. Arbuthnot had been married close upon four years. Yet was she so much in love with Gaston still as to color rosy red at the doubtful flattery of this remark.

She was a blonde, amply framed Devonshire girl, in the fresh summer of her youth. "Not a lady," according to the traditions of small social courts, the judgments of smaller feminine tribunals. Dinah's lips could scarcely unclothe before ineradicable accents of the west country working folk informed you that Gaston Arbuthnot, like so many artists—poor dear impressionable fellows!—had married beneath him. Not a lady, as far as the enunciation of certain vowels, the absence of certain petty artificialities of female manner were concerned, but with the purity of April dawn on her cheeks, the wholesome work-a-day qualities of a long line of yeoman progenitors in her heart.

About most women's charms men are prone to hold contradictory opinions. What world-renowned beauty but has at times felt the cold breath of adverse criticism? A smile from Dinah's pensive mouth, a gleam from Dinah's serious eyes, appealed to all beholders. Tottering old gentlemen would turn, with spectacles hastily adjusted, to wonder; fine ladies cast looks of despair after her from their carriages; young men of every sort and condition would lose their peace, if Dinah did but demurely walk along London pavement or provincial street. She was an altogether unique specimen of our mixed and overfeatured race; white and rose of complexion; chiseled of profile, with English-colored hair (and this hair is neither gold nor flaxen nor chestnut, but a subdued blending of the three); eyebrows and eyelashes that matched; a nobly cut throat; and the slow, calm movements that belong in all countries to the fair large Madonna-like women of her type.

Madonna. The word in connection with poor Dinah must awaken instant visions of sock-knitting and of pinafore-mending! Gaston's wife was, in truth, a very ideal of sweet and gracious motherhood. Gladly you would have imagined her, girt round by a swarm of toddlers, with eyes and cheeks like her own, to be bequeathed, a priceless heirloom, to future generations. But Dinah had no living child. And round Dinah's mouth might be discerned lines that should certainly not have found their way thither at two-and-twenty. And in Dinah's low country voice there was a lilt at times of unexpected sadness. Round some corner of her path

Dull Care, you felt, must lurk, stealthily watchful. At some point in the outward and visible sunshine of her married life there must be a blot of shadow. A woman like Dinah could be hit through her affections only. Her affections were centered painfully—I had almost written morbidly—on one subject. And that subject was Mr. Gaston-Arbuthnot, her husband.

"If Miss Bartrand be a hater of men, a scorner of marriage, so much the easier prospect for me," said Geoffrey. "At the present time I look upon myself as an educational machine to be hired out at so much an hour. I have no more mind to put on company manners for Miss Marjorie Bartrand than for any thick headed fresher I was vainly endeavoring to get through Little Go."

"You? It depends, rather, on what Miss Marjorie Bartrand has a mind for," observed Gaston Arbuthnot, with the certainty born of larger experience.

"Happily, the wording of the advertisement shows that Miss Bartrand means work. We have it here."

Geoffrey looked down the columns of a small, blue, badly printed local newspaper, half French, half English, that lay open on the breakfast-table.

"Tutor wanted. I, Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux, need a coach to prepare me for Girton. Classics and mathematics. Six hours a week. Apply, personally, at Tintajoux Manoir, after six P.M. An Oxford or Cambridge man preferred."

"Does any one know if Marjorie Bartrand is handsome?" exclaimed Gaston, with sudden animation. "Dinah, I adjure you to find out the truth in this matter. The women of the hotel would at least repeat the popular island beliefs. 'An Oxford or Cambridge man preferred.' The crystalline artfulness of the clause touches one, from a girl who makes a pretense at misanthropy."

"But surely, Gaston, you would not—"

"I would do most things. My classics were unfairly judged of by my college tutor. My mathematics," Gaston confessed with his air of unreliable fatuity, "never existed. Still, I kept all my terms, except, of course, the hunting terms. And I succeeded—as far as I went! If I passed no exams., I was at least never spun. I am as much a Cambridge man as Geoffrey is. I feel more than disposed to apply to Miss Marjorie Bartrand myself."

The muscles about Dinah Arbuthnot's delicately carved mouth trembled.

"You would tire before the first lesson was over," said Geoff, watching Dinah, while he addressed Dinah's husband. "You

want my incentive, Gaston, filthy lucre. My terms as a coach in Guernsey are five shillings an hour. Five sixes are thirty. Yes, reading classics and mathematics with Miss Bartrand will just pay half my weekly hotel bill, supposing I am not lucky enough to get other work."

"And you don't care a straw whether Marjorie Bartrand is pretty or plain? My dear Geff, if ever fortune brings you to the stage, take the part of Joseph Surface, for my sake. It would suit you to admiration."

CHAPTER II.

POKER TALK.

ERE Geoffrey had had time to retaliate, a factor of no common importance was destined to enter the difficult problem of Dinah Arbuthnot's happiness. Holding the corner of her apron before her lips, the jaunty French waitress tripped up a pathway leading from the hotel to the lime-shaded lawn, and placed a lady's card between Gaston's hands.

"Une dame. Mais, une petite dame qui demande monsieur!"

And the serving-woman's eyes took in the whole space of blue mid-heaven at a glance. Obviously this Norman waitress with acumen derived from an older civilization than ours, was mistress of the situation.

In a second of time Dinah had glanced over her husband's shoulder.

"Mrs. Thorne. Who is Mrs. Thorne? What is that written in pencil? '*Née* Linda Constantia Smythe.' Gaston, what is the meaning of '*Née*?'"

I am bound to add that Dinah pronounced the monosyllable as "knee." And a red spot showed on Gaston Arbuthnot's cheek.

From his precocious boyhood up, it had been a belief of Gaston's that lady-killing was an open accomplishment; the established means of defense, as much an art to be learned as the means of attack. And still, at the sight of those poor pencil-marks, at the thought of the youthful evenings when Linda Constantia used to hand him cups of weak tea, flavored atrociously with cinnamon, in the salon of a remembered Paris entresol, the conscience of the man was touched.

As Dinah's voice asked the meaning of the word "knee," he changed color.

"Linda Constantia Smythe. What an absurdly small world we inhabit! You and I, my love, and Geoffrey, coming across poor Linda Constantia! *Faites entrer cette dame*," he added, turning to the waitress. "An absolutely forgotten acquaintance of a hundred years ago, Dinah—an acquaintance of times before I had heard your name. Linda married—no, did not marry; went out to India, a spinster, and returned, poor soul! the wife of a Doctor Thorne. They say, in these Channel Islands, a man will run across every mortal he has known, or is fated to know, from his cradle to his grave."

"You never told me of your acquaintance with any Linda Constantia Smythe. I wonder you recollected her name so instantly, Gaston."

"Easier, perhaps, to recollect the name than the lady. Can it be possible that this is she?" A cream-colored parasol, a great many yards of cream-colored cambric, were advancing with agitated flutter across the lawn. "By Jupiter! how these meager women age when they once cross the line. Can this be the walk one has admired, I know not how oft? Are those the shoulders? My dear Mrs. Thorne," Gaston Arbuthnot rose to meet his visitor, thoroughly warm, thoroughly natural of manner; and Dinah, with a sensation of insignificance only too familiar to her, sunk into the background—"this is too kind! Doctor Thorne well, I hope? And your little daughter? You see I have watched the first column of the 'Times.' About your own health I need not ask. And so you have really given up India—have made a settlement in Guernsey! Dinah, my love, let me introduce you to one of my very early Parisian friends. My wife—Mrs. Thorne."

Dinah bowed with the staid gravity that in her case, as in that of some other lowly born people one has known, came so near to the self-possession of breeding. Mrs. Thorne was effusive.

Gaston felt an honest artistic satisfaction in watching the contrast the two young women presented to each other.

Linda Thorne's figure was lithe, straight, thin; the sort of figure that ever lends itself kindly to the setting forth of such anatomical deformities as shall have received the last approving seal of Parisian fashion. Her eight-buttoned long hands were pleasingly posed. She wore a great deal of frizzled darkish hair on a forehead that, but for this Cupid's ambuscade, might have been overhigh. Traces of rice-powder, at noon of a June day, were not absent from Mrs. Thorne's India-bleached cheeks. Her eyes were big, black-lashed, green. Her nose was flat, giving somewhat the Egyptian Sphinx

type to a personality which, with all its demerits, was by no means void either of allurements or distinction.

If Linda had spoken perfect grammar, in a London tone, and with a taught manner, you would have set her down, perhaps, as an actress from one of our good theaters. Speaking, as she did, at utter grammatical random, with the slightest bit of Irish accent and no manner at all, imagination might suggest to you that Dr. Thorne's wife belonged to some lost tribe of nomad lords or honorables. And the suggestion would be correct. Linda's grandfather was an Irish earl; a hare-brained gentleman not unknown to the newspaper editors of his day, but with whose deeds, good or evil, with whose forfeited acres, domestic relations, or political principles, our story has no concern.

Linda grasped Mrs. Arbuthnot's hands; drawing her toward herself with such warmth that Dinah's unsmiling face rose higher in air. She had an instinctive, a horrible dread that this old Parisian friend of Gaston's, this lady of the green eyes, rice-powdered cheeks, and effusive manner, might be going to embrace her.

"A pleasure, and an immense surprise to meet like this!" Mrs. Thorne took in with one long look the blooming fairness of the girl Gaston Arbuthnot had married, then dropping Dinah's hands, she turned coolly away. "I heard of your arrival here, Mr. Arbuthnot, from Colonel de Gourmet."

"Colonel de Gourmet is—"

"Our island authority in all matters of taste, from the dressing of a salad to the delivery of a sermon. He said you looked like a man who would understand the meaning of the word 'dinner.' That is the highest praise Colonel de Gourmet can give."

"I appreciate the compliment immensely."

"You must appreciate the colonel by meeting him at our house. Somehow, I fancied you were alone. I thought, stupidly, you had come to Guernsey for art reasons, and as a bachelor."

So her visit was deliberately not intended for the wife; after such a declaration, could not involve the necessity of the wife's future acquaintance! The keen blood quickened on Dinah's cheek. Dinah's husband was unmoved. Should it be counted as strength or as weakness, as fault or as virtue, that no small feminine by-thrust at his lowly born wife ever shook the outward composure of Gaston Arbuthnot?

"No, Dinah is with me. We are just starting on somewhat lengthy travels. We mean to spend the early summer here, Mrs. Thorne. In autumn we shall ramble leisurely on toward the South

of France, and in winter make a settlement of some kind in Florence. In Florence, greatly to my wife's satisfaction, I am pledged to do serious work."

"Yes? And is it true, then, that you are a sculptor by profession, that you have become an artist to the exclusion of other aims? Of course there is a way of looking at things which makes such a life seem the most charming possible." Mrs. Thorne clasped her thin clever hands as though entering some mysterious general protest against art and its followers. "And still, one has regrets. I was foolishly ambitious about you, if you remember, Mr. Arbuthnot. In our romantic boy-and-girl Paris days, I quite thought you were to get into Parliament. To be the people's friend. A kind of second Mirabeau. To make a tremendous name."

Gaston Arbuthnot's face for a second betrayed sincere perplexity. When was Linda Constantia ambitious in her hopes about his intellectual future? At what period of that shallow flirtation, a decade of years ago, could dreams of a seat in the House of Commons, and of Parliamentary victories, have been possible to her?

"I am open to flattery, Mrs. Thorne. When does a mediocre man not glory in the fine things which, according to his friends, he might have done? Yet it seems to me I never held a political opinion in my life."

"You once held very strong ones. Why, in a letter you wrote me after—after we had said good-bye in Paris, you were so nobly warm, I remember, about the English lower classes! Our sisters and brothers in the alleys, whose claims that dear, immortal Mrs. Browning so beautifully reveals to us."

Gaston Arbuthnot, at this mention of a letter, felt the ground grow solid beneath his feet.

"I must have written to you from Cambridge; for the moment, perhaps, had taken up some of Geff's fads. Let me introduce my cousin, by the bye. Geoffrey Arbuthnot—Mrs. Thorne."

Mrs. Thorne, who knew that in Geoffrey Arbuthnot she would never have a friend, smiled ambrosially. Geff rose. He gave the lady the lowest, at the same time the coldest bow in the world. It was a true case of elective dislike at first sight.

"Yes," went on Gaston, "I remember." He drew forward a garden-chair, into which Mrs. Thorne—no unpleasing picture in her broad Leghorn hat, her cambric morning-gown, her eight-buttoned gloves, her cream-colored sunshade—sunk gracefully. "I had taken up one of Geff's fads. The British Workman was an epidemic among all classes of Cambridge undergraduates that term.

Get hold of your poorer brother in his hour of sobriety—that is to say, on a Friday afternoon. Present him with a bookshelf of your own carving. Explain to him the newest thing out in draining-pipes. Show him how to make a window-box of rough cork, and present him with half a dozen slips of scarlet geranium. Humanize him—always, of course, with the capital H. Humanize him!”

“You call work so utterly noble as this ‘a faa’? I assure you, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, I am wild myself about the working classes. At this very moment I ought to be visiting among my district people.”

Mrs. Thorne’s eyes offered Geoffrey a glance of tentative sympathy.

“Different men come to the same end by different roads,” said Gaston. “Your greatest English authority on culture declares that any man with a dash of genius is the born elevator of others. I believe myself to have a dash—a thin streak rather—of genius. I believe myself to be a born elevator, but it must be in my own way.”

“And that is?” asked Geoffrey.

“Well, remembering the atmosphere of Barnwell and Chesterton, the scene of our early labors, one feels sure that the geraniums must have choked for want of air. Remembering the clay soil, the neighborhood of that oozy river, the thick air, the black ugliness,” Gaston shivered unaffectedly, “one is skeptical even as to draining-pipes. My opinion is that the English must be regenerated by art, by sculpture notably, owing to the low price of plaster casts. Sculpture can be best studied in Italy, and I am on my road thither. But Geoff and I may still be fellow-laborers in the same cause.”

Gaston rattled forth this specimen of “poker talk” lightly, his sombrero pulled low on his forehead, his shrewd, thought-reading eyes making observation the while of Linda—Linda whom, in long-dead Paris days, he just liked too well to be ever, for one moment, in love with. And the result of his study was that, in her Leghorn hat and cambric gown and slim, eight-buttoned gloves, Linda Constantia Thorne looked undeniably picturesque.

Each attitude that she took had, he saw, been diligently learned by heart. It was Mrs. Thorne’s habit when in town to spend her nights at the Lyceum, leaning gracefulness from the stalls, at so much an hour. Her expression savored rather of earth than heaven. Her figure spoke of the Parisian deformity artist, not of nature. But these faults were just *les défauts des ses qualités*. Gaston could never think idiomatically save in French. A well-

paying section of the art of 188—required models of Linda Thorne's type. And what artist, with pockets poorly lined, can resist the prospect of a good unpaid model?

If pure-faced madonnas commanded the worship yielded to them of old, no need to go further than the exquisite brow and throat of his own Dinah. But pure-faced madonnas in the nineteenth century are for the first-class sculptor. Gaston belonged to the dilettante third-rate men who execute pretty conventionalities with readiness, get money for them from the dealers, and are stirred neither by great expectation of success nor by great disappointment in failure.

In any case, so decided the quick brain under the sombrero. Linda Thorne, during half a summer here in Guernsey, must be a resource, personally, against stagnation. She had ripened into a kind of sub-acid cleverness that pleased Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot's taste. Her acquaintance opened out a not unprofitable means of spending one's hours between work and dinner. On principle, he was in favor always of the brain woman, as opposed to the sentiment woman. He chose the white rose rather than the red—his only condition being that the white rose must wear Jouvin's gloves, get her dresses from Paris, abjure patchouli, and be peremptorily certain that every inch of his, Gaston's, heart belonged to the somewhat neglected girl, with Juno face and Devonshire accent, who waited for him at home.

Before sixty seconds were over he had resolved upon soliciting Linda Thorne to be his model.

"And while Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot chisels marble for the English pauper in some delicious Florentine palace, you are thinking of Guernsey as an abiding-place?"

Mrs. Thorne asked the question softly of Geoffrey.

"I? Certainly not, madam. After a few weeks' holiday I am going back to my medical work in Cambridge."

"Geoffrey won his academic honors long ago," said Gaston. "In my cousin Geff you behold that melancholy specimen, Mrs. Thorne—a man of genius resolutely bent on not getting on in the world. After passing eighth in the Classical Tripos of his year—"

"And finding that a Classical Tripos does not mean bread and cheese," put in Geff with sturdy independence.

"My cousin went back to school, set up a skeleton, and began smelling evil smells out of bottles, like a good little boy of sixteen. In another year and a half he hopes to get some unpaid work in the East End of London. The worse," added Gaston, with the

heartly appreciation of Geoffrey, which was the finest thing in his own character—"the worse for all the wretched men and women in Cambridge whose lives are bettered by my cousin Geff's labors among them."

"Re—ally? Dear, dear, it is all too noble! A veritable life-poem in prose! My husband is a man of science, too. Only in his days, you know, doctors believed in their own horrible medicines. Doctor Thorne will be charmed to make Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's acquaintance. You are not working quite *too dreadfully* hard here in Guernsey, I hope?"

Geoffrey detested italics, even though he might tolerate a woman who habitually employed them. Judge how he was affected by the italicized enthusiasm, applied to himself, of Linda Thorne!

"My work in Guernsey will take the shape of pupils, if I am lucky enough to get any. My terms are five shillings an hour, madam. My tuition comprises Greek, Latin, arithmetic, a moderate quantity of algebra, and, if required," said Geff, without the ghost of a smile, "the use of the globes. Perhaps you could recommend me?"

"Oh, to be sure; I quite understand." Linda's highly wrought tones went through a diminuendo of interest, well bred but rapid, at this announcement of poverty. "Classics; the use of the globes; algebra; pupils."

"Of whom we hope we have caught one," cried Gaston, watching her face, gauging the extent of her sympathy for life-poems in prose. "You think, do you not, Geff, that you have secured Miss Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux?"

"I have already offered myself in writing, and shall walk out to Tintajoux, on approval, this evening. If Miss Bartrand thinks me capable of teaching her arithmetic, also the rudiments of Greek and Latin, at five shillings an hour, the bargain will be struck."

"Capable?"

The exclamation came from Dinah, who until now had maintained a staid but not ungracious silence while the others talked. A certain light in Dinah's eyes betrayed the profound conviction of Geoffrey's intellect which was felt by her.

Mrs. Thorne looked, without showing she looked, at the three Arbuthnots in turn.

"You think Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot more than capable of guiding the whole combined feminine intellect of our poor little Guernsey. Do you not, Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

Linda asked this with the North Pole voice that puts the social

position of a feminine questioner at so vast a distance from the social position of her questioned.

"I know nothing about intellect, except what I hear from Geoffrey and my husband. I am quite uneducated myself."

Dinah's reply was accompanied by a large level glance from those fearless, truthful Devonshire eyes of hers. And Mrs. Thorne's eyes fell.

Gaston Arbuthnot felt the heart within him rejoice. He would honestly have liked to accord a "Brava!" to his wife.

"A good many interpretations may be put upon the word 'uneducated,'" observed Geoffrey.

Mrs. Thorne had long known herself to be a clever woman. She felt that she was a cleverer woman than usual at this moment. Yet not a suspicion had she of the situation's actual point, not an inkling of the delicate friendship which bound Geoffrey to Dinah, and, at a somewhat lengthened distance, to Gaston.

"Ah! When you have stayed longer in our Robinson Crusoe little island— And it is charming, is it not?"

"Quite too deliciously charming," answered Gaston, paraphrasing Linda's own style of speech. "And cheaper than any decently liveable place this side Italy. For the daily consideration of two five-franc pieces one gets such sunshine as can not be bought in Great Britain, three excellently cooked meals, and the advantage of living under the same roof with members of the English aristocracy. You hear the domestic gossip, Dinah. Does not a dowager countess, with a German lady's-maid, a second husband, two pug dogs, and a wig, reside in some upper apartment of Miller's Hotel?"

"But you will find that we are a little behindhand. Doctor Thorne and myself are sensible that there is always the insular note. Our friends are most kind, most hospitable, and of course there are the military people to fall back upon. Still, remembering other days, the intimacies of the soul, the freedom, the expansion of Indian society, Robbie and I feel we are in exile. There is a constant danger of fatty degeneration—I see Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot laughing at me—fatty degeneration of the mind."

"Want of appreciation is the saddest thing in human life," murmured Gaston, with a serious face. "I am taking my wife to Florence on the outside chance that we may be recognized by the Florentines as persons of distinction. In London we are nowhere."

"Yes. There is the insular note. Now, these Bartrands of Tintajoux. Delightful people! Noble French family who emigrated a hundred years ago to Guernsey—such of them, I mean, as

were not guillotined—dropped the 'de' from before their name, and settled here. Well, it is very wicked to awaken prejudice, but—"

"Put aside all moral obligations," exclaimed Gaston Arbuthnot. "At a pass like this, dear Mrs. Thorne, it is a matter of life or death to some of us to have facts. Is Marjorie Bartrand pretty?"

With her long, gloved fingers Linda Thorne stroked down imaginary creases in her dress.

"Marjorie ought to be pretty. I am a frank adorer of beauty, you must know. I hate to see a girl with possibilities make the least of herself. So I always contrive to give Marjorie a friendly lecture. If she would only arrange her hair differently, as I tell her, and dress like other people, and take a little reasonable care of her complexion, she might be distinctly nice-looking. All to no purpose. Marjorie is Marjorie still. Some people call her an original. I," said Linda playfully, "go further. I call her an aboriginal."

"I see her with my mind's eye. Geoffrey, accept my condolences. All these classico-mathematical girls," observed Gaston, "are the same. Much nose, little hair, freckles, ankles. Let the conversation be changed."

"Marjorie has too little rather than too much nose, and is certainly too dark for freckles. It seems, Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, that you have grown cynical in these latter days. If I were a girl again I should be wild to become a pupil of Mr. Geoffrey's—if he would have me. I should adore classics and mathematics, a touch of science even! Positively, I think I *ought* to have a smattering of biology, just as one ought to attend the ambulance classes. But we may cultivate the Graces also. Now, Marjorie carries everything to extremes. Perhaps that is only another way of saying Marjorie is a Bartrand."

"And the Bartrands, you hinted, are, as a race, handsome?"

Never was man surer of carrying his point, by oblique if not by direct means, than Gaston Arbuthnot.

"Handsome, stiff-necked, unrelenting. I am not talking scandal against Queen Elizabeth, mind. If I said this in their presence, both Marjorie and her terrible grandfather would feel flattered. Something softer the child may perhaps have inherited from her Spanish mother."

("A Spanish mother!" interpolated Gaston, in speculative parenthesis. "Southern eyes flashing at you from the handsome Bartrand face!")

"But Marjorie has the true family temper. She knows too much. She ascribes the worst motives to every one. She can not forgive. About a twelvemonth ago, when the girl really ought to have been in the school-room, there was an unhappy little love story afloat in Guernsey."

"A lover who was unworthy of her, of course?"

"That sort of thing happens to many of us," said Linda, examining the stitching of her kerchief, "and yet we women manage to forget our own wrongs and to tolerate humanity for the remainder of our lives. Marjorie, reckoning pounds, shillings, and pence by our modest insular standard, is an heiress. Well, she despises the very name of man now, because a certain rather unworthy Major Tredennis sought to marry her for her money."

"And intends to be revenged upon us from the awful heights of Plato and conic sections! Geff, my boy, I don't envy you as much as I did a quarter of an hour ago."

"Oh, Mr. Geoffrey will be frightfully snubbed. It is only right to prepare him beforehand."

Mrs. Thorne raised her eyes—very fine and sparkling eyes they looked just then—to Geoffrey Arbuthnot's face.

"I shall like the sensation," remarked Geff. "To the usual forms of feminine caprice one should be indifferent. Snubbing means sincerity."

"If you tell her she has worked out a proposition in Euclid right she will resent it, think you are offering her an affront under the veil of compliment."

"Then I will speak of the propositions, only, in which she fails."

"If you admire the flower she holds in her hand she will throw it away. If you say the sky is fair, she will remark that, for her part, she thinks it looks like rain. Once or twice," said Linda, "I have met Marjorie Bartrand at some village treat or flower-show. The girl is not out, or likely to come out. She possesses one dress, I believe, the orthodox length of other people's! And each time I have pitied the unfortunate young men who tried to make themselves agreeable to her."

"I am not an agreeable young man, Mrs. Thorne, either in fact or intention. Your warnings are kind but I think even a Bartrand and an heiress will find it waste of time to snub me long."

As Geoffrey spoke, a side gate of the hotel garden opened. The figure of a spare, wooden-structured old gentleman dressed in white nankeen, and with a white umbrella, outspread, walked in.

"Why, there is Robbie! My dear good husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Thorne impulsively. "What in the world—"

"Allait-il faire dans cette galère?"

The quotation was put in by Gaston in an innocent voice.

Now Dinah's French studies had in her youth been conducted, for five terms, in a small and remote Devonshire boarding-school. Consequently she did not understand one word of the language as pronounced by Gaston. Her heart sunk as she watched an amused smile play round Linda's mouth. Already ideas were exchanged between these two people—dear friends once—from which she must, perforce, remain shut out.

"Doctor Tho—orne! Doctor Tho—orne!"

And with playful undulatory movements of her parasol, Mrs. Linda strove to arrest her husband's attention.

"Linda! Bless my heart, my love, I thought you were district visiting hours ago. Quite an unexpected pleasure."

And, hat in hand, Doctor Thorne advanced up the path, dutifully obedient to his Linda's call, to be introduced to Linda's friends.

He was an ultra India-looking, ultra curry-coloured old company's servant, considerably more than thirty years his wife's senior, with a snow-white military mustache, projecting white eyebrows, mild, tired eyes, a very thick gold chain, a puggaree, and buff shoes. You could never look at Doctor Thorne without a certain surprise that he did not live in Cheltenham; so well was his appearance in tune with your recollections of the Cheltenham promenade winter garden, Montpellier lawn-tennis courts, and club windows blossoming over with generals, admirals and old Indians.

But in Cheltenham Linda might have hunted! Quite early after their return to Europe, Doctor Thorne made the discovery that he and his wife had two passions—Linda's for horses, his own for living within his pension. This decided him on choosing an island for his residence.

"Bless my heart, Linda! A positively unexpected pleasure," repeated the doctor, with urbane little bows discreetly given to no person in particular.

"You dear delicious Robbie, to turn up just when you are so wanted!" cried Linda. "Mrs. Arbuthnot, let me introduce my husband." With a careless wave of the hand that said, plainly enough, this part of the ceremony might be cut as short as possible.

"Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot. Have I not often told you, Robbie, of my old friendship for Gast—, I mean, for Mr. Arbuthnot, in Paris? Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, a medical student from Cambridge."

Dr. Thorne was one of the most thorough believers extant in this questioning, skeptical nineteenth-century world. He believed in his own drugs, practicing, on a small but murderous scale here in Guernsey, and holding the same pharmacopœial opinions that obtained half a century earlier in Calcutta. He believed in the great political names he had admired when he was a school-boy; in the balance of power, in the infallibility of Church, State, and the British Empire generally. He believed in the extraordinary convenience of his house, in the fitness of his furniture, in the talents of his Linda. Dr. Thorne, I should add, had a mind—seriously small, thoroughly limited, but still a mind—not badly stored with facts, of a dry and statistical order, which he loved to impart to others.

Fastening at once on Dinah—for Linda, moving a few paces distant, began to lionize the adjacent islands for Gaston's benefit, and Geff contrived to vanish from the scene—fastening on poor Dinah for his victim, Dr. Thorne at once opened a conversation with the airy didactic grace in which old gentlemen would seem to have shone when the story-books of our infancy were written.

"Your first visit to the island, Mrs. Arbutnot? Then I trust you and your worthy husband will accept my services as your cicerone. There is much here, I can assure you, to stimulate the interest and foster habits of observation. In the first place, you see, we have the people themselves, whose habits of frugality contrast in a marked and favorable manner with those of larger countries. You are not perhaps acquainted with the statistics of savings-banks generally?"

"I have never had anything to save in my life, sir."

"Well, then, I can give you a few important facts. Sit down, pray. Let us protect our heads under the shadow of this delightful ash, or lime, which is it? I can give you a few details, with the amount actually saved by each person in this island over the age of fifteen. Studies of this kind captivate the softer faculty of benevolence, while they strengthen and enlarge the understanding."

Dinah was well dowered by nature with means of self-defense. She could put down an impertinence, I am afraid could resent an injury, as well as any fine London lady of them all. But in Dinah's moral arsenal was no weapon for demolishing a mild little prosy gentleman of sixty-seven, with snow-white mustache, yellow shoes, and a tired smile. Some intuition she could not have analyzed made her almost feel a species of pity for Linda's husband.

We do not easily experience two distinct kinds of pain at one

moment. It may be that Dinah's heart was too sorely troubled for her to be sensible of boredom, even at the hands of such a master in the art of boring as the doctor.

"That morsel of table-land in the south is Sark," observed Linda, pointing to an outline of haze faintly towering above the dense blue of the Channel. "And the streak nearer at hand—please don't look at me, but at the islands—the streak nearer at hand, with the sun shining on its yellow patches, is Jetho; and nearer still, where the pale green spaces mark the shallows, is Herin. I hope you are following my stage directions, Mr. Arbuthnot."

Mr. Arbuthnot was scrutinizing her face; curiously, as one scrutinizes any waif or stray from the past, suddenly brought back to one; but tenderly, too. When does a man of Gaston's character feel aught but kindness toward the woman whose life has been a little embittered by his own fascination?

The kindness made itself felt in his voice and look when he answered her:

"Almost the last time you and I saw each other we followed stage directions side by side. Have you forgotten those New Year charades of Madame Benjamin's?"

"I have forgotten nothing," exclaimed Mrs. Thorne, with a sharpish accent. "I have remembered you, Mr. Arbuthnot; I have thought of you, hoped for your happiness all these years. Now, at length, I am called upon to witness it."

She gave a glance at Dinah patiently enduring the doctor's statistics, then went on with a sort of effort:

"You must let me congratulate you. I am blunt, matter-of-fact—just as I used to be." Certainly Linda Thorne was at no pains to modulate her voice. "Mrs. Arbuthnot is simply beautiful. Those matchless lines of profile! Those soft waves of gold above her brow!"

"You like that way she has with her curls? I am answerable for it. It took exactly fifteen months to convince Dinah that a woman may wear short hair upon her forehead, yet save her soul alive."

"And the lips, the chin! I believe Mrs. Arbuthnot's face is the first I have ever seen without a flaw."

Linda spoke as one might speak of a shell cameo, of a china vase, of a lily modeled in wax.

Gaston Arbuthnot mentally translated the chill distinct tone, with edification to himself.

"Dinah's is a nature laid on large lines. She is the best possible

wife for such a light-ballasted man as I." He made this confession of faith with genuine earnestness, feeling rather than acknowledging he felt, that the speech set his conscience satisfactorily at rest. "Goodness matters a great deal more, does it not, Mrs. Thorne, than a beautiful face?"

"Possibly. I am ready to accept what you say. Tell me, only, you are not offended by my outspoken admiration," she went on. "Surely I may presume sufficiently on old—old acquaintance, to congratulate you on your marriage, on the domestic sunshine of your life?"

"It is delightful to feel that your heart is warm as ever! As a matter of priority, congratulations, Mrs. Thorne, were due to you first. Dinah and I have been married three years and three quarters, while you—"

"Oh, it makes me too old a woman to be precise about dates," said Linda, looking away from him. "My daughter, although she retains her ayah and her spoiled Indian ways, is a big girl, almost four years old. I hope you will visit the Bungalow soon for Rahnee's sake."

"The Bungalow being—"

"The straggling, white, one-storied place which you see low down under the bill to the right. That is my home, built entirely from Doctor Thorne's own plans. The ugliest house, every honest person who sees it admits, in Guernsey."

"Not in its interior. I am certain a house inhabited by you could not be ugly."

"Prettily said. Why, pray, in the present æsthetic age, cut off as we are from the poetic upholstery of London, should a house inhabited by me not be a great deal uglier than other people's?"

"I decline, at this hour of the morning, to be logical. One has an instinct in such things."

"Rahnee, at least, is not ugly. I am not afraid of your judgment on our little Rahnee. Now, what is to-day?"

Gaston Arbuthnot believed it to be the fourteenth day of June, in the year of grace 188—.

"Well, then"—Mrs. Thorne's voice sunk so as to be only half a tone higher than a whisper—"will you dine with us this evening, at half past seven? I believe," added Linda vaguely, "that one or two of the artillery officers may be coming to us. We do not entertain. I make a point of telling everybody that. Doctor Thorne and I do not entertain. But if our friends care to drop in

unexpectedly, to eat our roast mutton with us, and smoke a cigarette with Robbie afterward, there we are."

It was to be a bachelor party, then. Dinah might possibly have been invited to eat roast mutton at Mrs. Thorne's table. She could, under no circumstances, be asked to smoke a cigarette with Robbie afterward. But Gaston accepted with frank cordiality. During the years of his married life it had so grown to be a matter of course that Dinah, dear good girl! should never go into the world, that even the form of hesitation at leaving her had been dropped on the part of Dinah's husband.

"No dress coat, no white tie, *please*. In these long June evenings one likes to stroll away as far from bricks and mortar as possible. There will not be a moon to night. Still, even in the darkness, it will be enjoyable to breathe the pure air and watch the light upon the Caskets from the jetty yonder."

"And what do you think of my old friend?" Gaston Arbuthnot asked his wife when the Thornes had departed on their different roads, the doctor to visit a patient in Miller's Hotel; Linda, her dress, a cavalier might say, scarce fitted to the work, to her poor dear brothers and sisters in the alleys. "I have listened to Linda Thorne's verdict on you. Now for the reverse of the medal. What do you think of Linda Thorne?"

"I think her vulgar."

It was the first time Gaston had heard judgment so harsh from Dinah's lips. Hers was the least condemnatory of human souls. She shrunk with a rare modesty from giving opinions on the people with whom Gaston associated, was openly unashamed always of her own lowly origin, and of her inability to discern the finer shades of a society to which she was not born.

A slight tinge of red kindled on Arbuthnot's cheek. "Vulgar is a strong word. Women are not always generous in their strictures upon each other. Yet it happened that Mrs. Thorne was singularly generous in her criticism of you. Linda thinks you beautiful, my dear. She said yours was the first face she has ever seen without a flaw."

"Standing close beside me as you did, Mrs. Thorne would have shown delicacy by not talking of me at all. Although I tried not to listen, I heard too well what she said. It was those flatteries of Mrs. Thorne's, for of course I am no judge of manner, which made me think her vulgar. A lady at heart would have known how you must wince on hearing me so coarsely praised."

For one moment Gaston Arbuthnot's looks were threatening, then the cloud passed.

"I believe you are half right, my dear girl," he observed, in his sunniest voice, and picking up his wife's hat from the spot where it had fallen at her feet. "But people of the world are not as transparently truthful as you, my Dinah. You shoot at the bull's eye when you do discharge an arrow, and seldom miss the mark. Now, let me tie your hat strings! Lift your chin—so! Let us wander off to the sea and forget all the insincerities, all the Linda Thornes in existence."

The speech must have been uttered with some of the airy mental reservation that Gaston Arbuthnot's habit of "poker talk" made easy to him. He did not for one instant forget that he was engaged to dine that evening at the Bungalow; engaged, although there was no moon, to enjoy pure air and watch the light upon the Caskets from the jetty wonder.

CHAPTER III.

HAS HE A WIFE?

"THE battle is to the strong, Marjorie Bartrand; the race to the swift. Women have been fatally handicapped since the world began. And Nature understands her own intentions, depend upon it, better than we do."

"Does Nature intend one half of the human race to be ciphers?"

"Nature intends men to have wives. There is no escaping that fact. When I was a girl we got quite as much education as society required of us."

"Society!"

"We learned modern languages, French and Italian, for of course German was not in vogue, and I must say I think Italian much the more feminine accomplishment."

"That is paying an exceedingly high compliment to German, ma'am."

"And we studied English literature, solidly, not out of little green-backed handbooks. Never a day passed that I did not read Addison, or some other fine Queen Anne writer, aloud to my father. And we knew how to write a letter. And we colored from Nature, for the love of the thing, exceedingly well, some of us, though there was no South Kensington, and we never called

ourselves art students, and, and—Marjorie Bartrand, how did this conversation begin?"

"Apropos of Spain, did it not?"

"To be sure. Apropos of your Girtton scheme, your wish to see classics and mathematics pushed into a country where women are still content to be women, and very womanly ones. University teaching for girls is a freak that will die out of itself, like coal-scuttle bonnets, bishops' sleeves, crinoline, or any other mode that is at once cumbersome and unbeautiful."

Afternoon sunshine was flooding the weather-beaten lichened walls of Tintajoux Manoir. The Atlantic glittered, one vast field of diamonds, until it melted into pallid sky along the southern horizon line. The keen, cool ocean saltiness mingled with and almost counterbalanced the fragrance of the pinks, heliotropes, and roses in the Reverend Andros Bartrand's old-fashioned borders. On a garden bench, at some short distance from the house, were seated two ladies, fresh of face, both; countrified of dress; fast friends, although more than forty years stood between their ages. A cedar of Lebanon spread wide its layers of odorous darkness above their heads. A grassplot, emerald green, close shorn, was their carpet.

"If your wits were your fortune, child, such ambitions might be pardonable." So after a space, the enemy of progress resumed her parable. "In families where the olive branches are in excess of the exchequer, the governess, Heaven help her, is expected to 'ground' the boys, as they call it, in Latin grammar and Euclid. But with your grandfather's position, your own inheritance, putting the idea of your marriage aside—"

"As you know I have put it, for ever and ever!" cried Marjorie Bartrand, her whole face seeming abruptly transformed into a pair of passionate eyes. "Did we not decide long ago, Miss Tighe, that the word *mar*—, the word I detest so heartily, should never be spoken between us? Allow that I may not be forced, for money, to ground small boys in Latin grammar. Allow that my visions of raising Spanish girls above the level of dolls are as laughable as you all seem to find them. May I not want to bring myself, Marjorie Bartrand, up to the highest improveable point as a human being? Great in mathematics I shall never be."

"I am thankful, indeed, to hear you say so," remarked Miss Tighe, with an air of relief.

"But even the seigneur is forced to confess I might become—a fourth-rate classic! I know French and Spanish, Dogherry wise, by nature. That must help me a long way on the road to Latin.

And I have learned seventeen irregular Greek verbs—I'm not sure about the aorists—and Mademoiselle le Patourel and I went straight through the Apology of Plato with Bohn's crib."

"Poor Sophie le Patourel! You have outgrown her, at last, as you outgrew all your previous dozen or more governesses."

"I don't know about 'outgrown.' Grandpapa ridiculed our attempting Greek, from the first. You know the cruel way we Bartrands have of ridiculing under cover of a compliment! Well, one day last week, Mademoiselle le Patourel was reading the text of Plato aloud, not very flowingly, poor good soul—"

"Sophie le Patourel had better have kept to the millinery! Her mother made up a cap like no woman in this island!"

"And locking round she saw the seigneur, outside the window, with a wicked smile about that handsome old mouth of his as he listened. Grandpapa made her the prettiest speech in the world about her quantities, her fine classic tastes, and her pupil. And Mademoiselle le Patourel never gave me another lesson."

"So now your scheme is to prepare for Girton by yourself. Ambitious, on my word!"

"My scheme," said Marjorie, lowering her voice and glancing over her shoulder to make sure her terrible grandfather, Andros Bartrand, was not within earshot—"my scheme is to have a real University coach of my own. A Cambridge B.A. at the present time residing in Guernsey."

Cassandra Tighe started up from her seat.

She was a spare, tall, conspicuous spinster, with a face all features, a figure all angles, a manner all energy. Her hair was bleached, as much by exposure to weather as by actual age. Her complexion was that of a frosted apple. Her dress cost her fifteen pounds a year!

Living alone with one woman-servant in a small Guernsey cottage, it may be affirmed that Miss Tighe made as much of her life as any gentle-woman of modest income, and more than sixty summers, in the British dominions. Her intellectual resources were many. She was a thorough, an inborn naturalist. She played the harp, and with no dilettante touch, but as ladies early in the Victorian reign were wont to play that instrument. She drew. On stormy evenings, when she knew her voice could not penetrate the cottage window shutters, Cassandra confessed that she sung—such songs as "I see Them on their Winding Way," "The Captive Knight," or "Zuleika."

Her popularity and her influence were widespread. The figure

of Miss Tighe, in her red fishing-cloak, with nets, hooks, jars, boxes, bottles, overflowing from her village cart, was familiar throughout every nook and corner of the island. If she had not had the sunniest of human hearts you might have been tempted to dub her a gossip. That good old English word, however, is associated in these days with a more than doubtful spice of malice. And men and women who had known Cassandra Tighe for thirty years averred that they had never heard an unkindly judgment from her lips. She was simply a *raconteuse*—we lack the English equivalent—a sympathizer in all the vivid varying doings that constitute the lives of young and wholesomely happy people; a chronicler of goss; a delighter in love affairs.

Simply this. And yet, not unfrequently, Cassandra Tighe made mischief. Truthful, as far as conscious veracity went, to a fault, this excellent lady's memory was in a chronic state of jumble; so stored, it may be, with polysyllabic names of plants, grubs, and fishes, that subsidiary human details had to be packed in pell-mell, and take their chance of coming out again untwisted. And, depend upon it, these tangled well-meaners, not your deliberate villains, are the cause of half the loves marred, the heart-burnings, the jealousies, that make up the actual dramas, the unwritten three-volume novels of this work-a-day world!

"You are going to study with a tutor, Marjorie Bartrand! With a Cambridge B.A.! With a MAN! What does your grandfather say?"

"I have not told him the news, Miss Tighe. I grudge giving the seigneur such intense pleasure. 'If you insist on learning Latin and Greek,' grandpapa has always said, 'learn them decently. Send these trashy governesses to the winds. Be taught by a competent master.' Yes," cried Marjorie, bringing down a very small hand with very great energy on her knee, "I grudge grandpapa his triumph, but the truth must be told. Now that I have caught him, I shall begin coaching with my B.A., my Cantab, forthwith."

Cassandra shook her head, mournfully incredulous. She was of an age and of a disposition to which revolutionary ideas do not come with ease. There was really no place in her mental fabric for the picture of Marjorie Bartrand, here, inside the sacred walls of Tintajoux, reading classics and mathematics with a University coach.

"I think it more than likely the plan will fall through. We have no Cambridge tutors in the island, unless, indeed, you mean good old Mr. Winkworth from the High Street Academy?"

"I mean no one belonging to Guernsey. I mean a person who—ah, Miss Tighe," the girl broke off. "I see that I must make full confession. No knowing, as grandpapa says, when you once begin to speak the truth, where the truth may land you. My B.A. is coming to arrange about terms and hours this evening."

"And how did he—how did any stranger man hear of you?"

"I put an advertisement in the 'Chronique Guernésiaise,' three days ago."

"Without consulting the seigneur! Child—you did this thing? You gave your name, unknown to your grandfather, in the public newspaper?"

"I gave my name in the public newspaper, ma'am, and this afternoon I got an answer to my advertisement. Wait one second and you shall hear it."

Marjorie drew a note from the breast of her frock, and with an air half of mystery, half of triumph, began to read aloud:—

"Miller's Hotel, Tuesday, June 14th.

"Geoffrey Arbuthnot, B.A., Cantab, is willing to read classics and mathematics with Miss Bartrand. Terms, five shillings an hour. Geoffrey Arbuthnot will call at Tintajoux Manoir, on approval, between the hours of seven and eight this evening."

"Arbuthnot? Why, this is fatality." Cassandra discerned a special providence, an inchoate stroke of destiny in most things. "I was looking in at Miller's Hotel last night. That reasonless creature, Mrs. Miller, has one of her throats again, and I did so want her to take some of my globules, but in vain. The ignorance of uneducated people—"

"And you saw my coach of the future?" Interrupted Marjorie, knowing that when Miss Tighe got into such engrossing interests as throats and globules, she must be brought back to her subject with a run.

"Yes, I saw Mr. Arbuthnot. A rough diamond, my dear, to speak truth."

"That is so much in his favor," said Marjorie, peeling, shred from shred, the petals of a carnation that she held between her fingers. "I want to do my work for Girton steadily, unvexed by the sight or thought of that most irritating of God's creatures—a beauty-man."

Cassandra looked hard at the girl, remembering days, perhaps, when a beauty-man, in the fullest sense of the contemptuous epithet, had scathed rather than softened Marjorie Bartrand's heart.

"Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, on the score of ugliness, will meet

your wishes, my dear. A rough-hewn Scotchman of the Carlyle stamp. A man who looks as though he ought to do big things in the world. A man with a scar—got, I am told, in a quixotic pavement fight—traversing his forehead.”

“I like the sketch. Proceed.”

“As regards Geoffrey Arbuthnot himself, I have done. Walking at his side, the evening light falling on her uncovered head and fair face, was the loveliest sight these old eyes have beheld for many a year—Geoffrey Arbuthnot's wife.”

“Geoffrey Arbuthnot—has he a wife?” cried Marjorie in an altered voice. “My Cambridge B.A.—married! I hope you are sure of your facts, Miss Tighe. You know that sometimes—rarely, of course, mistakes occur in our little bits of Sarnian intelligence. You are perfectly certain that Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot is a married man?”

“I have seen his wife. How can you ask me if I am certain? ‘A daughter of the gods,’” Cassandra quoted, “‘divinely tall,’ fair-skinned, large-eyed, with a look of repressed sadness about her mouth that makes her bloom and youth the more noticeable. I was sitting in poor Mrs. Miller's parlor, endeavoring to argue the woman out of taking Doctor Thorne's drugs. As a human creature, a father, a husband, I have not one word to say against Doctor Thorne—”

“I have!” exclaimed Marjorie Bartrand imperatively. “As a human creature, a father, a husband—most especially as a husband—I have everything imaginable to say against Doctor Thorne.”

“As a physician, I consider him a manslaughterer. Yes,” repeated Cassandra, with pious warmth, “a manslaughterer. Indeed, if I had sat at the inquest on more than one of Doctor Thorne's departed patients, Heaven knows what verdict I should not have returned against him.”

“But your story, Miss Tighe? The man like Carlyle; the beautiful wife. Return, please, to the Arbuthnots.”

“Well, just as I was trying to put reason into Mrs. Miller's weak mind, I was startled by the sight I told you of. This lovely young woman went past the window, not two yards from where I sat.”

“With her husband. Was she leaning on Mr. Arbuthnot's arm?” asked Marjorie. “Did they look as if they had ever had a quarrel? Was she in white—bridal looking? Did you hear them murmur to each other? Miss Tighe, be dramatic! At Tintajoux we have not the joy, remember, of eventful living.”

“Mrs. Arbuthnot was dressed in black. Her hair lay in short

blonde waves on her forehead. She wore not a flower, not an ornament about her person. As they passed the window her husband remarked that he considered the roast duck and peas of which they had partaken for dinner were excellent."

"So much," said Marjorie, affecting cynicism, "for a chapter of married romance."

"Ah, that has been. The key of our common life is C major--roast duck and green peas--whatever accidental sharps and flats we may deviate into occasionally. The romance has been. I was overcome by the young woman's singular beauty," went on Cassandra. "I asked her name, and was rewarded by hearing such an account of them as warmed my heart. The girl belonged to the humblest class of life—a gardener's daughter, or something of the kind; and Arbutnot, while he was still an undergraduate at Cambridge, married her."

"Geoffrey Arbutnot?"

Marjorie repeated the name softly; a question in her tone rather than in her words.

"Geoffrey, I presume; that is to say, most decidedly and beyond question, Geoffrey," answered Cassandra, with the fatal certitude of inaccuracy. "I am the more positive because I felt a kind of love at first sight for these two young people, and made Mrs. Miller give me details. A party of Cambridge men were staying in the hotel when first the Arbutnots arrived; and some of these men knew the husband by sight. He is looked upon as rather eccentric among his fellows. I am afraid, Marjorie, whenever a man leads a nobler life than other people the tendency of the day is to call him eccentric. And Geoffrey Arbutnot's life must be very noble."

"Because he had the courage of his opinions in choosing a wife?"

"Not that, only. Arbutnot is a student still at the Cambridge medical school, and gives such time as he has over from study to the most miserable people in the Cambridge streets. Not proselytizing, not preaching—for my part I don't believe much in a preaching young man," said old Cassandra, whose opinions tended toward the broad; "simply binding up their wounds as men and women. Doing the Master's work, not talking about it."

"And his beautiful wife helps him!" exclaimed Marjorie, her sensitive Southern face aglow. "Ah, Miss Tighe, thank you again and again for your visit and for telling me this news. In my foolish, trivial, wasted existence what a splendid bit of good fortune that I should have the chance of knowing two such people!"

Cassandra Tighe looked a little uncomfortable. She prided herself on her freedom from the prejudices of her sex; within limits, really did startle her friends, sometimes, by the free exercise of private judgment. But the liberality of a white-haired lady, whose sixty years of life have run in the safest, narrowest, conventional trammels, may differ widely from the liberality of a hot head, an eager, self-forgotten young heart like Marjorie Bartrand's.

"It will be a fine thing for your Girton prospects, capital for your Greek and Latin, to read with Mr. Arbuthnot. But I gathered—you must take this as I mean it, Majorie Bartrand; you have no mother to tell you things—I gathered from different small hints that Mrs. Arbuthnot is not exactly in society. That she is good and sweet and honest," said Cassandra, "you have only to look in her face to know; still if I were in Marjorie Bartrand's place, I should wait to see what the island ladies did in the matter of calling."

Marjorie paled round the lips—sign infallible, throughout the Bartrand race, of rising tempest. Cassandra, knowing the family storm-signals, prepared to take a hasty departure.

"I forget time always under the Tintajoux cedars. And there is plenty for me to do at home. To-morrow Annette and I are off to Sark for five days' shore-work. Our talk about your new tutor has been an interesting one."

"Especially the clause that prohibits my calling on the new tutor's wife!"

"There is no prohibition at all. The seigneur might safely leave his card on Mr. Arbuthnot. It would be a very pretty piece of condescension, and of course a gentleman calling upon a gentleman can lead to nothing," added Cassandra, rather ignobly temporizing.

"Exactly. Thank you very much, Miss Tighe, for your advice. As you say, I have no mother to enlighten me as to the dark mysteries of calling or not calling. And as I consider the island ladies too frisky for pioneers—"

"Marjorie! Our archdeaconess, our irreproachable Guernsey matrons, *frisky*?"

"I shall just have to act for myself. As Mrs. Arbuthnot, you tell me, has all good qualities written on her face, and knowing the fine things we do know of her husband's life, it must be a credit to any woman—above all to an archdeaconess—to make their acquaintance."

"Still, if she is unused—"

"Oh, I shall not put myself forward. If their merit is unrecognized, if narrow-minded, irreproachable people hold back from calling on them, I can understand that there may be shyness on my tutor's part in mentioning his wife. I shall simply bide his time. I shall be silent until he chooses, himself, to speak to me of Mrs. Arbuthnot."

"That will be wise. Treat him, honest gentleman, as though one had not heard of his marriage. Meantime we can find out if our leading ladies, Madam Corbie especially, intend to notice her—"

"But in my own self, I honor Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot," interrupted Marjorie, her face coloring like a rose at sunset. "I admire, honor, *love* him! I wish the world were full of such men. I hold out both hands in fellowship to him at this moment."

Cassandra, for once, showed prescience worthy of her name. Cassandra argued no more.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRINITY BALL.

GEOFFREY ARBUTHNOT was a man of whom none could say that Fortune had been to him a too fond mistress.

As a four-foot high boy, with shrewd observant Scottish eyes, with a Scottish mind already beginning to hold its own ideas as to the universe, he was sent, through the reluctant generosity of an uncle, to a London public school. In those days sanitary and social reforms for overtaxed city school-boys were still inchoate. Each boy must look after himself, make personal acquaintance with facts, with the cut and thrust of human circumstance, take his recreation on the London pavements, sink or swim as he listed.

Geoffrey Arbuthnot, before he was ten, had made acquaintance with a great many facts, all hard ones. He had no pocket-money, no tips. His holidays had to be paid for out of the same reluctant uncle's purse—father and mother sleeping in a Perthshire kirk-yard ere Geff could well remember aught—and were enjoyed under the roof of such persons as endure homeless school-boys, on systems of rigid economy, as a business.

Hard-working to excess, perhaps because in work he found a friend, pushed into dead-language grooves because the masters sought to keep up the dead-language reputation of the school, Geoffrey Arbuthnot awoke one morning at the age of eighteen a

fine classic. He was sent up to compete for a Cambridge scholarship, won it, and, true to tradition, began reading, his heart warmed by the unwonted feeling of success, for his Classical Tripos.

Considering that every aptitude he possessed lay in an opposite direction to classical study, one can scarcely look on the nine Cambridge terms that followed as fortunate. The square man did his best to fill the round hole faithfully, his own squareness decreased not. And then, in the midst of this Greek and Latin epoch, came his love affairs—I retract the plural; his one overwhelming passion, ardent, pure as was ever love felt by man for woman; a passion which paled, ere he could well grasp it, into shadow, and which still—yes, in the Guernsey sunshine of this June day—rendered his happiness paradoxical, just at the age when happiness should be fullest, most complete.

Geoffrey Arbuthnot had not been smiled on by fortune. Nevertheless, he possessed gifts which for the simple hourly manufacture of human contentment are better worth than the bigger favors of the gods. Life interested him. If he had had few artificial pleasures, he had exhausted no pleasures at all. In regard of nature, his sensations were vivid as a child's. Walking forth to Tintajeux Manoir at an hour when the crisp blue and gold of afternoon had reached decline, Geoffrey felt youth run in his veins like wine. The hay and clover smells from the newly cut fields; the "kiss sweet! kiss sweet!" of the thrushes; the verdured hedges touched still by spring's immaturity, though the flower of the May was past; the peeps at every turn of purple salt water; the roadside ferns through which, knee-deep, he waded, the yellowing honeysuckle sprays which brushed his face; the streamlets slipping seaward away, through channels thick with cresses and forget-me-nots; ay, even the whiffs of wood-smoke from the farm-house chimneys, the incomprehensible Froissart French in which he heard the haymakers chattering to each other over their bread and cider—all the low, melodious notes of this homely landscape affected him with a physical and keen delight.

His life, since remotest baby-days, when he walked holding his mother's hand in blithe, fair Scotland, had been passed among streets and among the human creatures who inhabit them. The pleasure of the Bethnal Green arab who, at six years old, first handles a living daisy differs, in degree only, from Geoffrey's as he trudged along through the Guernsey lanes, his mind vaguely fixed on Tintajeux Manoir and on the chill reception from his future pupil which there awaited him.

Would Miss Bartrand's thunder glances be discharged from black eyes or blue ones? Geoffrey had reached a stretch of undulating rushy common at the extreme western point of the island when this question presented itself. Ahead was a vista of moldering banks, gay in their shroud of blue-flowered, ivy-leaved campanula, and with here and there a jutting tip of granite, crimson, by reason of its glittering mica, in the sunset. Above, hovered a falcon, almost lost to view against the largely vaulted, bountifully colored evening sky.

Interpreting Froissart French by such lights as he possessed, Geoffrey learned from an ancient goat-tending peasant dame that a neighboring block of stone building, partially visible on the left through oak and larch plantations, was Tintajoux Mancir. Would the girl who awaited his visit there be blonde or dark? Something Mrs. Thorne had hinted about a Spanish mother. According to all mournful human probabilities, the heiress would be swarthy; a black-eyed, atrociously clever-looking young person, he thought, with stiff linen collar and wrist-bands, with a dignified manner and inkstained fingers. Also, despite her seventeen summers, with a leaning toward stoutness.

Geoffrey disrelished the picture projected before his mental sight about as much as in his present buoyant physical state he could disrelish anything. Consulting his watch, he found with relief that he had reached the outskirts of Tintajoux five-and-twenty minutes too early. There would be time amidst this delicious wealth of atmosphere and hue that flooded him around, for a quiet smoke before encountering the terrible presence of Miss Marjorie Bartrand!

A suspicion that the heiress's peppery temper might be roused if one's jacket smelt of tobacco rather heightened the alacrity with which Geoff Arbuthnot threw himself down on the fragrant sward and produced his pipe and pouch. The pipe was a black, ferociously Bohemian-looking "bulldog," the pouch a delicate mass of silk embroidery and velvet. As he drew forth—alas! that I should have to say it, his strong-flavored cavendish, Geoffrey thought, as it was his custom to think four or five times each day, of the tender friendly woman's hand that worked this pouch for him—Dinah's!

Poor Dinah! When he saw her last, an hour before, her hands were clasped together with the half-apathetic gesture of a person to whom moral suffering has become a habit. A basket of colored wools stood before her on the table, ready for her evening's cross-

stitching. Round the corners of her lips was the look of silent endurance which had become so painfully familiar to Geoffray's sight. And all this for what? There was no great sin, surely, in Gaston's putting himself at once under Mrs. Thorne's easy guidance. The happiest households one hears of, thought Geoffrey, striking a vesuvian, are those in which the broadest law of liberty obtains. Does not an artist, more than other men, want change, professionally? Dinah should know that a creator, of the cheap popularity order, as Gaston with his pleasant self depreciation would say, must have a constant supply of straw for his brick-making; must have material, "stuff," must see brisk lights, sharp shadows that the calm twilight of domestic happiness does not yield. And yet—

It was that constant, unspoken "and yet" in Geoffrey's mind which, up to the present point, had rendered the close friendship of the three Arbuthnots a paradox.

Leaning back against a little thyme-grown knoll, his hands clasped behind his head, Geff looked, with eyes that had learned the secret of most common things in Nature, at the moorland weeds around him. Here were graceful quake grasses in plenty, and waving sedges, and the poet's wood-spurge, three cups in one. Close at his right hand grew a stalk of rush crowned by four or five brownish insignificant flowers, the least lovely outwardly of all the brilliant Guernsey flora. Well, and it came to pass that the neighborhood of these degenerate, colorless petals altered Geff's mood. He thought of the inherited mysteries and dooms of human life. He called to mind the sordid prose of the Cambridge outskirts, and the wretched men and women, forced deserters from the army of progress, who lived in them. He called to mind his own often despairing work, the struggles, hard and single-handed, of his manhood, his youth. His youth—ah! and with that, the moorland scene faded. The years since he first saw Dinah spread themselves out scrollwise, suddenly illuminated, before Geff Arbuthnot's mind.

How well he remembered himself a lad of twenty! How well he remembered the hawthorn-scented evening of their first meeting! He was walking alone through the one street of Lesser Cheriton, had passed its rectory, its seven public-houses, was honestly thinking of his approaching "Mays" and of nothing in the world beyond, when a cottage casement window opened just above his head, and looking up he saw her unornamented, in russet gown and

apron blue, a jug of water in her white hand ready for the thirsty row of mignonette and geranium slips in the window-box.

His loved her, there and then. It was an old, a sacred story now, and Geoffrey questioned no syllable of the text as he scanned it quickly through. He took her picture back with him to his dark, book-strewn scholar's attic in John's, and that night he dreamed of her. Next morning he walked forth to Lesser Cheriton at the same hour, passed the rectory, the seven public-houses, and again caught glimpses of Dinah's head as she sat, with a very fat old lady, alas! of a very humble class, in a close little parlor sewing, the lamp lighted, the windows fast shut, all the glories of the outside June night ignored.

The same kind of mute worship went on the next evening and the next. Toward the end of the week the old lady of a very humble class accosted him.

Geff could remember the thrill of that moment yet. Away through the garden gloom did he not descry the flutter of a russet dress, the outline of a girlish head downbent over a bush of opening roses? The young gentleman would pardon her for taking such a liberty, but as he seemed fond of the country he might care sometimes for a bunch of cut flowers. She was a lone widow and lived too far off to send in her garden stuff to the Cambridge market except in wall-fruit time. If she could dispose, friendly like, of a few cut flowers it would be a little profit to her. Some of the university gentlemen, she had heard, dressed up their rooms, like a show, with flowers, and the roses and carnations this term were coming on wonderful. If the young gentleman would please to walk round the garden and see?

The young gentleman walked round the garden. He bought as many flowers as his arms could carry away. He learned that the girl's name was Dinah Thurston, that she was "apprenticed to the dress-making," and had come up all the way out of Devonshire to spend a month's holiday with the old lady, her father's sister. The Devonshire burr in Dinah's speech disenchanted him no more than did an occasional lapse or two in Dinah's grammar. When is a stripling of his age disenchanted by anything save frowns or rivals? Geoffrey held original ideas on more than one burning social subject, had made up his mind—on the first evening he saw Dinah Thurston—that it was a duty for him and for every man to marry young.

And he cared not one straw either for want of money or for plebeian birth.

Good, because healthy blood flowed in this girl's veins, thought Geff—the incipient physiologist. Sweet temper was on her lips. A stainless woman's soul looked forth from those fair eyes. She was above, only too much above him in every excellence, inward or external. What chance had he with his plain face, his shy student's manner, of winning such a jewel as Dinah Thurston's love? What hope was there that she would wait until the day, necessarily distant, when he would be able to work for a wife's support?

He became a daily caller at the cottage, and it is hard to suppose that both Dinah and Dinah's protector were quite blind to the truth. Garden stuff was ever Geff's ostensible object. He wanted cut flowers for himself, for an acquaintance who could not walk as far as Lesser Cheriton. He wanted radishes, cresses—so different, he declared, to the stringy salad of College butteries! He wanted to know when the strawberries were likely to ripen.

He wanted some daily excuse for gazing on Dinah Thurston's face.

Hard, I repeat, to think that the feminine instinct, however unsophisticated, would make no guess as time went on, at the state of the poor young undergraduate's heart. But this is just the kind of point at which good women, in every class, are prone to innocent casuistry. At all events, Dinah Thurston and her aunt gave no outward sign of intelligence. The old lady took her daily shillings and sixpences with commercial gravity. Dinah cut the flowers or tied up little bunches of cress and radishes in a convenient form for Geff to carry.

So, as in a new garden of Eden without a threat of the serpent's coming, matters progressed for yet another fortnight.

Lesser Cheriton lies at a junction of rough Cambridgeshire lanes; a village girt round by blossoming orchards in May, by sheets of black water or blacker ice in December. In addition to its rectory and seven public-houses, it contains a score or two of the thatched, high shouldered cottages common to this part of England. Being untraversed by any of the Mald's Causeways, Lesser Cheriton lies somewhat out of the ordinary undergraduate track. Geoffrey had no intimate friend in the University save Gaston Arbuthnot, whose time was quite otherwise occupied than in watching the comings and goings of his simpler scholar cousin. He was known to be a hard-working man, who took his daily walk from duty and without companionship. But for an after-dinner stupidity—a turning missed—the little love drama would probably have unfolded itself with commonplace speed, and Geoffrey would have gained a wife,

for I can not think Dinah's unoccupied fancy would, at the age of eighteen, have been hard to win. The turning, however, *was* missed—thus.

Just as Geff, his hands filled with flowers, was parting from the girl, one hushed and radiant evening, there came a rush of wheels—he could hear it now, dreaming over the past on this Guernsey moorland, and the blood rose to Geff's face at the remembrance—a rush of wheels down the slumbering street of Lesser Cheriton. For a few seconds the sound was muffled by the ivied church-yard wall where the road wound abruptly. Then, at a slapping pace, trotted past a high-stepping bay, of which Gaston Arbuthnot was for the moment the possessor, also Gaston Arbuthnot, in his well-appointed cart, returning to Alma Mater, with a brace of rich Jesus friends, after spending the afternoon at Ely. Lesser Cheriton does not lie on the road between Ely and Cambridge. Lesser Cheriton, we may boldly say, lies on the road nowhere. But these young gentlemen were in the adventure-seeking, after-dinner mood, when a devious turning of any kind is taken with pleasant ease. And here, on their wrong road, and in Lesser Cheriton's one street they found themselves.

There was daylight lingering still in the low fields of Cambridge-shire sky. There was a young May moon, too, whose yellowish silver caused the outlines of Dinah Thurston's head and throat to stand out in waxen relief against the dusky arbutus-hedge that divided the cottage garden and the road.

Gaston Arbuthnot turned sharply round for an instant and saw her. Shouting a cheery "Hullo!" to his cousin, he drove on, giving a little valedictory wave of his whip ere he disappeared. And Geff, the glory shorn suddenly, unaccountably from his Eden, bade Dinah good-night, and started on his four-mile trudge back to Cambridge.

It was ten days before he again smelled the mignonette and roses of the cottage, or slaked his soul's thirst by gazing on Dinah's face. By early post next morning came a letter saying that the uncle to whose reluctantly generous hand he owed the hard all of his life lay at the point of death. The old man was sound of mind still, and desired his nephew's presence. A lawyer wrote the letter, and it was added that Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot would well consult his worldly interests by obeying the wishes of the dying man without delay.

It was one of those crises when all our present and future good seems to resolve itself into a desolate "perhaps." Geoffrey's debts

were few. Still, he had debts. The possibility of remaining up his nine terms at Cambridge might depend upon the will of this stern-hearted uncle who, dying, craved his presence. And yet, in obeying the summons, might he not be risking dearer things than worldly success—jeopardizing hopes which already threw a trembling light over his loveless life?

He had spoken no syllable of his passion to Dinah, was too self-distrustful to tell his secret by means so matter-of-fact as a sheet of paper and the post. And so, like many another timid suitor, Geoffrey Arbuthnot elected to play a losing game. With immense fidelity in his breast, but without a word of explanation, he set off by noon of that day to London—not ignorant that Gaston's eyes and those of Dinah Thurston had already met.

A girl's vanity, if not her heart, might well have been wounded by such conduct. In after times Geoffrey Arbuthnot, musing over his lost happiness, would apply such medicine to his sore spirit as the limited pharmacopœia of disappointment can offer. If he had had a man's metal, if, instead of flying like a schoolboy, he had said to her, on that evening when Gaston drove past them at the gate, "Take me or reject me, but choose!"—had he thus spoken, Geoffrey used to think, he might have won her.

To night, on the Guernsey waste-land, with heaven so broad above, with earth so friendly, the past seemed to return to him without effort of his own, and without sting. The fortnight he passed in London, the unknown relatives who beset the sick man's bed, the scene amidst a London church-yard's gloom, wherein he, Geff, in hired crape, was chief mourner, the reading of the will, the return to Cambridge—all this, at first, floated before his vision in gray monotone, as scenes will do in which one has played a spectator's rather than an actor's part. Then in a moment (Geoffrey's half-closed eyes scanning the moor's horizon, the soft airs blowing on his face) there came upon him a flash of light. It was so intolerably clear that every leaf and flower and pebble of a cottage garden in far-off Cambridgeshire stood out before him with a vividness that was poignant, a vividness that had in it the stab of sudden bodily pain.

Springing to his feet, Geoffrey resolved to brood over the irrevocable no longer. He emptied the ashes from his pipe, then replaced it, with Dinah's delicate morsel of handiwork in his pocket. He took out his watch. It was more than time for him to be off, and after a farewell glance at the campanula-shrouded knolls, Geff started briskly in the direction of Tintajoux Manoir. But the ghosts

would not be laid. There were yet two pictures, a garden scene, an interior, upon which, whether he walked or remained still, Geoffrey Arbuthnot felt himself forced, in the spirit, to look.

The garden scene, first: time, seven of a June evening, sky and atmosphere rosy as these that surrounded him now. Thirsting to see Dinah's face, Geoffrey walked straight away from Cambridge station, he remembered, on his arrival from London. He was dusty and wearied when he drew near the village. The rectory, the seven public-houses of Lesser Cheriton, looked more blankly uninhabited than usual. Some barn-door fowls, a few shining-necked pigeons, strutted up and down the High Street, its only occupants. When he reached the cottage no one answered his ring. The aunt was evidently absent. Dinah, thought Geoffrey, would be busy among her flowers, or might have taken her sewing to the orchard that lay at the bottom of the garden. He had been told, on some former visit, to go round, if the bell was unanswered, to a side entrance, lift the kitchen latch, and if the door was unbolted, enter. He did so now; passed through the kitchen, burnished and neat as though it came out of a Dutch picture—through the tiny, cool-smelling dairy, and out into the large shadows of the garden beyond.

Silence met him everywhere.

The roses, only budding a fortnight ago, had now yearned into June's deep crimson. The fruit-tree leaves had grown long and grayish, forming an impenetrable screen which shut out familiar perspectives, and gave Geoffrey a sense of strangeness that he liked not. Under the south wall, where the apricots already looked like yellowing, was a turf path leading you fieldward, through the entire length of the garden.

Along this path, with unintentionally muffled footsteps, Geoffrey Arbuthnot trod. When he reached the hedge that formed the final boundary between garden and orchard a man's voice fell on his ear. He stopped, transfixed, as one might do to whom the surgeon's verdict of "No hope" has been delivered with cruel unexpectedness.

The voice was his cousin Gaston's.

Geoffrey had no need to advance further. In his black clothes among the trees' thick leafage he was himself invisible, and could see by the slightest bending of his neck as much as the world in the way of personal misery had on that summer evening to display to him.

For there, at the entrance to the orchard, stood Dinah Thurston, the glow that lingers after sunset throwing up the fresh beauty of

her head and figure, and there stood Gaston. They were face to face, hands holding hands, eyes looking into eyes. And even as Geoffrey watched them his cousin bent forward and kissed Dinah Thurston's unresisting lips.

Youth, the possibility of every youthful joy, died out in that moment's anguish from Geff Arbuthnot's heart. But the stuff the man was made of showed itself. More potent than all juice of grape is pain for evoking the best and the worst from human souls. Desolate, bemocked of fate, he turned away, the door of his earthly Paradise shutting on him, walked back to the scholar's attic in John's, whose full loneliness he had never realized till now, and during two hours' space gave way to such abandonment as even the bravest men know under the wrench of sudden and total loss.

During two hours' space! Then the lad gathered up his strength and faced the position. As regarded himself, the path lay plain. He must work up to the collar, hot and hard, leaving himself no time to feel the parts that were galled and wrung. But the others? At the point which all had reached, what was his, Geoffrey Arbuthnot's duty in respect of them?

It was his duty, he thought—after a somewhat blind and confused fashion, doubtless—to stand like a brother by this woman who did not love him. Stifling every baser feeling toward Gaston, it was his duty to further, if he could, the happiness of them both. The sun should not go down on his despair. He would see his rival, would visit Dinah Thurston's lover to-night.

Gaston Arbuthnot, a man of means, which he considerably lived beyond, occupied charmingly furnished rooms in the first court of Jesus. Peacock's feathers and sunflowers had not, happily for saner England, been then invented. A human creature could profess artistic leanings, yet run no risk of being expected by his fellows to live up to a dado! Gaston's surroundings seemed rather the haphazard outcome of personal taste than the orthodox result of a full purse and adherence to the upholstery prophets. They had the negative merit of sincerity.

Walking with quick steps toward-Tintajoux, how distinctly those rose-lit Jesus rooms, the last in the series of pictures, came back upon Geoffrey's sense! He remembered an unfinished sketch in clay upon the mantel-piece; a Lillith, with languid eyes and limbs, with faultless passionless mouth, with coils of loosened hair; charms how unlike those of the demure Madonna in the cottage at Lesser Cheriton! He remembered the smell of hot-house flowers, the like of which at all seasons of the year was wont to hang about

Gaston Arbuthnot's rooms; remembered a pile of yellow-backed French books on a writing-table, also a framed photograph of the prettiest actress of the day, exactly fronting the easy-chair in which his cousin Gaston was pleased to affirm that he "read."

Geoffrey Arbuthnot had to wait some minutes alone, his cousin's level, self-contained voice informing him from an inner room that he, Gaston, was dressing for the last ball of the term, given by Trinity. Would Geff not have come to that Trinity ball, by the bye? Ah, no. Mourning, weepers. Decent respect—cette chère Madame Grundy. And so the uncle had cut up decently! Nothing for him, of course. Kind of wretch whom uncles always would regard as belonging to the criminal classes. Had a mind to dispute the will, ruin Geoffrey as well as himself by throwing the whole thing into Chancery!

Then Gaston's airy step crossed the room to a waltz tune that he whistled. A curtain was drawn back. The two men whose future relations were to be one long paradox stood opposite each other.

Gaston Arbuthnot was in evening dress; his white cravat tied to perfection, a tiny moss rose in his button-hole; a pair of unfolded lavender gloves were in his hand. His handsome "Bourbon" face locked its handsomest. No traces of perturbed conscience marred his gracious and debonaire mien. A man may surely find himself deep in a flirtation with some soft-eyed village Phillis, and at the same time like to dance with as many pretty girls in his own class of life as choose to smile on him!

He advanced with outstretched hand.

"I congratulate you, Geff."

The uncle had left Geoffrey a sum that for the forwarding of the frugal student's worldly ambition was more than adequate—one thousand pounds.

"And I," said Geff, his ice-cold fingers returning his cousin's grasp firmly, "congratulate you!"

There must have been some modulation in his voice, some look on his baggard face, that supplemented these four words, strongly.

Gaston Arbuthnot changed color.

"What, on Lillith?" he asked, shifting away, and bending over his unfinished sketch. "It is to be good, like all my things, some day. A new block in the pavement of the road to Hades! At present this left arm, above the elbow, is, as you see, a libel on anatomy."

Geff followed him. He rested his hand on his cousin's shoulder

with such emphasis that Gaston Arbuthnot had no choice but to look up.

"I congratulate you," he repeated very low, but with a concentrated energy that infused meaning into each syllable, "I congratulate you upon your engagement to Dinah Thurston."

So these visions of the past stood out; not merely with rigid correctness of form, but with color, with fragrance, with the stir of human passion, the ring of human voices, to give them vitality. By the time the last one had vanished—the rose-shaded lamps, the actress in her frame, the clay-sketched Lilith, the yellow-backed novels dissolving into the actual grays and greens of this Guernsey moorland—Geoffrey found himself ringing, with a somewhat quickened pulse, despite his indifference to every form of feminine caprice, at the front bell of *Tin'ajeux Manoir*.

CHAPTER V.

MARJORIE.

THE door was opened by a French serving-man, who bestowed on Geoffrey a bow such as valets used to copy from their masters in days when the first country in Europe possessed a manner. Had not Sylvestre made the grand tour with the Reverend Andros Bartrand more than half a century before the present time! He was clad in a faded livery of puce and silver, wore long white locks that in this uncertain light gave Geoffrey the notion of a pigtail and hair powder, and had a wrinkled astute face, in which official decorum and a certain thin twinkle of humor, if not of malice, contended together agreeably for precedence.

"Monsieur demands these ladies?" from her earliest years, Marjorie Bartrand had received a kind of spurious chaperonage through this plural phrase of Sylvestre's. "Will monsieur give himself then the trouble to enter?"

The look of the old manoir was cheery; its atmosphere was sun-warmed. And still the prospect of his approaching ordeal chilled Geoffrey's courage. The thought of standing before Miss Bartrand on approval caused him to pass a bad five minutes, as he paused in the drawing-room, whither Sylvestre had ushered him, for her coming.

Could the initial letters of his terrible pupil's character be de-

ciphered, as one constantly hears it asserted of women, through the outward and visible presence of the house she inhabited?

The Tintajoux drawing-room was overvast for its height. It opened toward the south, upon the cedar-shaded lawn; it communicated through a double row of fluted pillars with a smaller apartment toward the west. The uncarpeted floors were of oak, black from age, fragrantly and honestly beeswaxed, as floors used to be when Sylvestre was a boy. Nothing like your gray-headed butler for keeping up Conservative habits of industry among the servants of a younger generation! Over the chimney-piece and doors were half moons, those graceful "lunettes" of a hundred years ago, carved in bass-relief and tinted in flesh color. The lace window draperies, looking as though they must fall to pieces at a touch, were relieved by an occasional fold of rich hued crimson silk. Venetian mirrors hung at all available points along the tarnished white and gold walls. On either side the mantel-piece were miniatures of eighteenth-century Bartrands in velvets and brocades, no prefiguring of destiny looking out from their unconcerned, half-closed patrician eyes. In the center stood a grand buhl clock, its design a band of Cupids hurling down rose leaves on some unseen object (the guillotine, perhaps,) behind the dial.

In each of the deeply bowed windows stood a Petit Trianon gilt basket. They were full of odorous roses, pressed close together, as cunningly set roses ought to be, and showing no green between their damask and pink and faintly yellow petals.

As Geoffrey Arbuthnot's eyes took in one after another of these details, the room seemed to him a piece of special pleading for the whole past Bertrand race. He stood here in a world that knew no better! He was amidst the shades of a generation which had heroically paid the price of its misdeeds. And the fancy, true or false, predisposed him toward the present owners of Tintajoux. They had at least, he felt, the fascination of a pathetic background. Rare charm to an imaginative man whose business has led him among the dusty tracks of our modern, low-horizoned English life!

Moving to a window, Geff looked forth across lawn, garden, orchard, upon as fair a sweep of sapphire as ever gladdened human eyes; for here in the heart of the Channel you get beyond the North Sea's yellowish green, and have real deep ocean blue. In the foreground, so near indeed that Geff instinctively stepped back within shelter of the window's embrasure, a clerically dressed tall man was slowly pacing to and fro on the grass. Somewhat rakishly placed on one side his head was a black velvet skull-cap. An

after-dinner glow shone on Andros Bartrand's bronzed four score-year-old face; between his lips was a cigar. A couple of excellent-bred brindled terriers slunk at his heels.

"Ho, *Cedipus*,
Why thus delay our going?"

Taking his cigar from his mouth, the Seigneur of Tintajoux recited a passage from Sophocles in Oxford Greek accents of sixty years ago, looking about him with the leisurely physical enjoyment of the moment that was more common, probably, at the time of his own youth—a time when Goethe still walked upon the face of the earth—than it is now.

Something towering, individual, audacious, was in the old figure. Geff watched the Reverend Andros with admiration. A man so richly vitalized that he could smoke an after-dinner cigar, declaim Greek verse for his own pleasure at eighty—a man who had so proved himself superior to the common shocks and reverses of human life—should be one worth knowing, even though his fine moral equipoise must perforce be studied in the murky and dubious atmosphere engendered by a girl's temper.

Tintajoux Manoir with its weather-bleached walls, its courtly, faded drawing-room, its half lights, its rose scents, had already laid hold of Geoffrey's imagination. The seigneur with his antiquated Greek accent, his wise, subtly ironical old face, reciting Sophocles under this late sky, had for him a personal interest. If only the one jarring note need not be struck! If the capricious heiress were but a full-fledged graduate, a resident M.A. say, within the distant walls of St. Margaret's Hall, or of Girton!

Scarcely had the thought crossed Geff Arbuthnot's mind when he heard a door behind him open and close. Turning quickly, he saw, to his pleasure, a child dressed in a white and red cotton frock, confined by a bright-colored ribbon round the slim waist, and who advanced to him—a pair of brown, beautifully carved small hands, outtheld.

"You are ten minutes late, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot." The faintest un-English accent was traceable in her voice. "But you are welcome, a thousand times over, to Tintajoux."

Now Geff was a veritable child-lover, and if this young person had only been two years younger than she looked, he would, likelier than not, have finished several of his life's best chances by lifting her in his arms and kissing her on the spot. With a little princess

of thirteen or fourteen one must be on one's guard—for the first five minutes, at least, of acquaintance.

He took her offered hands and held them, enjoying the arch vivacity of that upturned face, brimful of sunshine as a water lily's cup; a face good as it was sweet.

"Poor Cambridge B.A. Poor abashed big coach!" thought Marjorie Bartrand. "The worthy man must be used to cold receptions, I should say, on his wife's account. Now, let me set him at his ease."

Crossing to one of the Trianon baskets she softly signed to Geoffrey to follow.

"Do you see that 'Bon Espoir,' Mr. Arbuthnot?" A hawk moth hovered, at the moment, with poised vibrating wings above the mass of roses. "In Spain we have a superstition about the 'Bon Espoir' when he enters a house. If he is powdered with black we say, Bad luck! If he is powdered with gold, Good! Ah," clapping her hands, "and our 'Bon Espoir' is gold! We are to be lucky, sir, you and I, in our dealings. Now I shall tell you another Spanish saying. 'To begin a friendship with a gift is a happy omen.' Take this rose from me."

And with a movement of quick grace, most artless, most unconventional, one of the finest roses in the basket was transferred by the pupil's hand to her future master's button-hole.

"Grazias, muy grazias," said Geff, hazarding the only two words of Spanish he knew.

Marjorie clasped her hands over her ears.

"You pronounce frightfully ill, though the words are true, Mr. Arbuthnot. Decent people say the 'z' in grazias sharp. They say 'mou-y.' Yes, sir—and although you do teach me classics and mathematics—Spanish and French are my natural languages, and I shall always think myself free to give you a little lesson in pronunciation."

"Classics and mathematics!" stammered Geoffrey Arbuthnot, reddening as the unwelcome image of Miss Bartrand was brought back to him. "I believed—I mean, my impression was—"

He stopped short.

"English University manners are not good," thought Marjorie, shaking her head, pityingly. "But I like my poor B.A.—yes, just because he is shy and rugged, and has that ugly scar across his forehead. I respect him for his unpolished manner. I will call on his wife to-morrow! My impression was," she remarked aloud, showing such a gleam of ivory teeth in her smile, as rendered a large and

rather square mouth lovely—"my impression was that I advertised in the '*Chronique Guernésiaise*' for some one good enough to help me in my attempts at work, and that Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot offered to be that some one. I hope, sir, you do not repent you of the offer already?"

So he stood in presence of the heiress; a little country girl with sun-kissed hands, innocent of ink-stains, a child's fledgling figure, a child's delightful boldness, and not one barley-corn's weight of dignity in her composition. Should he, obeying first impulse, believe in her, and so incur the fate of well-snubbed predecessors? Or should he arm himself against the coquetry which this very frankness, this assumption of simplicity in dress and speech, might mask?

Long ago, in Gaston's Cambridge rooms, Geff came across a French volume entitled, "*The Bad Things which Men have said of Woman.*" He extracted therefrom, at more than one reading, such bitter nectar as his scanty knowledge of the tongue allowed.

Several of the maxims had slumbered in his memory. They re-awakened at this moment, and bade him play the philosopher, remember at what price per hour the heiress was about to hire him, and for what work. "Self-respect was in his keeping still," cried half a dozen wicked old well-chosen French cynics in a breath. "Let him retain it."

And Geff followed his own impulse. He looked on Marjorie's unblemished child's face and believed in her—with a circumspect belief.

"One or two things, I know, want explaining." A wave of Miss Bartrand's hand signaled to Geoffrey to take a chair. Then she seated herself opposite him, the rosy western after-glow falling directly on her clear, truth-telling face. "You thought my advertisement bizarre, did you not?"

"On the contrary, I thought it sensible and to the point."

Geff's answer was given with stiff courtesy.

"But too independent; for I had never consulted my grandfather, understand! I never spoke to the seigneur till an hour ago, about my having a coach. Tell me, you don't think the worse of me for this?"

Had he fallen asleep, lying among the blue-leaved campanulas on the moor, with the waving sedges at hand, with the falcon soaring high overhead; was this drawing-room, with its mirrors and rose-scents and Cupids, a dream? Could it be possible that Marjorie Bartrand, the heiress, who never bestowed a civil word upon any

man, should plead, in sober reality, for his, Geff Arbuthnot's, good opinion?

"I am obliged to think and act for myself. There is my defense. My grandfather, whom you will see presently, is clever—oh, cleverer than any man in Guernsey, perhaps in Spain! Mathematics, classics—you even could name no branch of learning, Mr. Arbuthnot, that grandpapa has not."

"Of that I am sure, Miss Bartrand."

"He was known in Oxford sixty years ago. The revolution so disgusted my great-grandfather with everything French that he turned Protestant out of revenge. A mean action—say?"

"That depends upon the manner of conversion."

"Well, he had come to be Seigneur of Tintajoux through the inheritance of his Guernsey wife, and to be a proper seigneur in this country, you should be a reverend. How great-grandpapa got to be ordained I don't know. Andros, his son, was sent to Winchester and Oxford."

"The seigneur I am about to see?"

"Yes, and Andros became a fellow of his college. He was one of the three best classics in Oxford. But he stands right away out of my reach." Marjorie stretched up her slight arms as though pointing to the inaccessible mental plane occupied by the Reverend Andros. "He lives with the gifted people of sixty years ago. For me that is too old."

"Rather," said Geff, unable, though he would fain stand on his dignity, to repress a smile.

"Grandpapa is an eighteenth-century man. He was just born early enough to be able to make that his boast. And he has eighteenth-century ideas. 'Unless a woman be a Madame de Staël,' says the seigneur, 'let her keep silent. If she be a Madame de Staël, let her keep a thousand-fold more silent.' Now I," cried small Marjorie, "mean to make my voice heard. I want to know nineteenth-century life straight through. I want to learn facts, at first-hand. As a matter of lesser moment, I want a degree. Do you think London University would be beyond me?"

"I must know first," answered Geoffrey, "to what height of learning you can reach on tiptoes."

A flash of indignation swept over Marjorie's face. The possibilities of temper showed round that acute, square-cut mouth of hers.

"It is correct masculine taste to laugh at a girl's ambition, I know! The seigneur, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot—all have the same fine generosity! But why do we lose time? Perhaps, if you will

come to the school-room, you will look over my books, sir. It is too late, of course, to do any work to-night?"

"Not too late for me," answered Geoffrey, in his heart liking the girl better and better. "I came out hoping we should begin to read at once. My time is yours."

Miss Bartrand led the way, her face held somewhat aloft, into a room plainly furnished as a study, and strewed with books and papers, on the west side of the inner drawing-room. As Geoffrey followed, every sense tempered to a keener edge than usual, he could not help remarking with what curiously grace Marjorie's raven-black tresses were braided. He had been to a few, very few, London entertainments in his life, had glanced at most varieties of our current female "heads;" none tolerable to him beside a certain recollection of soft gold worn in little waves, that way poor Dinah had with her curls, upon a Madonna forehead. But Marjorie's ebon locks, gathered high, in one thick coil, upon the summit of her head, compelled his admiration. The style was too foreign, altogether, for English taste. And the white and red dress, the gaudy waist ribbon, were too evidently got up for effect, Geoffrey decided, now that he could draw breath, and criticise. The complexion, too, to a man who for years had had a living ideal of snow and rose-bloom before him, was certainly sallow. And those great black eyes!

Stopping short, Marjorie waited for her visitor on the school-room threshold. At the moment he overtook her, she turned, looked up at him. And behold! her eyes were blue; intensely blue as, I think, only Irish or Spanish eyes ever are; with a sweep of jetty lash, with a hidden laughter in them, although the possibilities of temper still lurked round the corner of her lips.

"This is to be your torture-chamber. From the time I was five I have worked myself up to my present state of ignorance at that ink desk you see, and under the rule of a long line of governesses, most of whom gave me and themselves up in despair. Now put me to the test, if you please, Mr. Arbuthnot. Don't spare my feelings. Treat me as you would treat any backward school-boy."

And Geoff Arbuthnot obeyed the command to the letter. He did not spare her feelings.

Marjorie Bartrand's attainments were to the last degree patchy and scrappy; the typical attainments to be looked for in a quick, self-willed child, indifferently taught by a succession of teachers, and whose faulty studies had been supplemented by an avid, indiscriminate consumption of good books.

"Your classics are weak, Miss Bartrand."

Geoffrey remarked this, pushing papers and books aside, and looking kindly across the table into his pupil's face.

"Oh! I never liked the subjects. I knew that you would say so."

With an effort Marjorie Bartrand kept her voice under control.

"But your classics are stronger than your mathematics."

"Yes, Mr Arbuthnot."

"You will have a great deal of work before you can bring either to—we will not say a high, but an ordinary level."

"Yes, Mr. Arbuthnot."

"You spoke of a London degree. Let us look at London matriculation first. Children are trained at high schools for about six years, I understand, for London matriculation. And many—more than a third—of the candidates fail."

"I spoke of London because London gives you letters after your name. The older universities would be more thought of in Spain. I have grandpapa's leave to go to Newnham or Girton when I am eighteen. The first of all my governesses lives in Cambridge. So I should have *one* friend there."

"The Girton and Newnham work is on the same level as the other colleges."

"And you think that work beyond my reach?"

Geff Arbuthnot thought that a girl with a head so graceful, with eyes so blue, with soft brow gleaming under such a weight of dusky hair, might be content amidst the flower-scents and cedar shades of *Tintajoux Manoir*, content to let Euclid and Greek particles go—to be a woman, to accept the homely, happy paths wherein women may walk unguided by exact science, or the philosophy of all the ancients.

The opinions he knew were heterodox, and not to be uttered, especially by a man who, at five shillings an hour, had engaged himself to lighten the thorny road that leads to knowledge.

"Memory will get one through most exams., Miss Bartrand. You have a good memory?"

"For all useless things, yes. In 'Don Quixote,' for instance, you would find it hard to puzzle me. You know a little Spanish?"

"Five words at most."

"How deplorable! A person who has no Spanish is not quite in possession of his faculties. If one had time to spare in these long summer days, I—"

Marjorie broke off abruptly, coloring to the roots of her hair, as she remembered the existence of her tutor's wife. A girl not igno-

rant of Spanish only; a girl who could just overcome the difficulties of the prayer-book and lessons, perhaps, or write a letter without any glaringly bad spelling, on a push.

"If one had time to spare in these long summer days, Miss Bartrand—?"

Geoffrey Arbuthnot found a pleasure it had been hard to him to account for, in her confusion.

"I was going to say I would teach you Spanish. As if Spanish mattered! As if there were not nobler, lovelier things in life than book-learning. But that was a real Bartrand idea. We Bartrands, moldering among our owls in this old place, can not see daylight clear. We think too much of ourselves. Our minds are as narrow as our garden paths. I teach you Spanish, indeed! I'll tell you what I call that proposal." She leaned across till her sweet bud of a face was close to Geoffrey's, and spoke with a suspension of the breath. "I call it a bit of *devilish* Bartrand pride and stiff-neckedness."

Geff started, with a pantomime of horror, from the adjective italicized.

"You know the meaning of Tintajoux—Tint-à-jou in old Norman. You English in Cornwall say Tintagel—the devil's castle. A fit abode for us. Look at grandpapa! He quarreled seven years ago with Monsieur Nclairmont, the rector of our next parish, over a Latin quantity. Never in this world will grandpapa speak again to that innocent old man."

"A wrong quantity is no jesting matter," observed Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

"Then he has three daughters, my aunts. Neither of the three has spoken to the others or to him for five-and-twenty years. No vulgar quarrel to start with. 'We Bartrands wage war on a grand Napoleonic scale,' says the seigneur. 'An exchange of reproachful epithets is sheer waste of brain-power.' The marriage of each sister in succession wounded the other sisters' pride. All wounded grandpapa's. It was quite simple."

"You color highly, Miss Bartrand."

"I am giving you sketches from life. No coloring could be too high for showing up our Bartrand traits, the little faults of our virtues, as the French say, prettily."

Geoffrey felt himself on the road to disenchantment. The girl might have marvelous eyes, a wealth of dusky hair, tones of liquid music, a sunburned hand that was a poem. The heart within her was hard to the core. Linda Thorne, by hidden affinity, perhaps,

was not so very far out in her judgments. Marjorie knew too much, had learned bitter lessons in human nature, not from books, but from keen reading of the men and women highest to herself in blood.

"Yes, we think too highly of our small talents. I, with my shallowness, to propose teaching a Bachelor of Arts anything! I ought to be grateful to Mr. Arbuthnot for condescending to read with such a pupil. Now, which three mornings in the week could you give me?"

He could give her Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. They gravely arranged their hours. They talked over the work—say, a book of Cicero, the two first books of Euclid—to be looked over before their first lesson. Then Geoffrey Arbuthnot rose to his feet. Putting on a staid and tuitional manner, he stated that his terms, in Guernsey, would be five shillings, *British currency*, per hour.

Marjorie's face grew one hot blaze of shame.

"Oh! of course—please do not speak of money. It is far too little. It is an honor, I mean, for me to learn, and I am coming—"

She was just about to commit herself, and so considerably simplify Geff's position—just about to blurt out, "and I am coming to call upon your wife," when a footstep, alert, though it had paced the earth for more than eighty years, sounded on the garden path outside. The glass door of the school-room was pushed open, and old Andros Bartrand walked in.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO IN ARCADIA.

AN atmosphere of fresh country air, blent with tobacco smoke, surrounded him, as we like to think it surrounded Parson Adams. He saluted Geff with that nice mixture of personal reserve and general expansiveness which among a bygone generation was called breeding. He bestowed a partial smile on Marjorie ("Those Bartrand company smiles," as she used to bemoan, when she was a younger child. "Counters that I must make believe are sixpences until the visit is over, until the round game melts into our grim duel at solitaire").

"Mr. Arbuthnot, I presume? Welcome to Tintajoux, Mr. Arbuthnot." He shook Geff's hand with a distant affability. "Glad always to see a man from the Alma Mater in our little island. Oxford is not the Oxford of my days; still—"

"Mr. Arbuthnot hails from Cambridge, grandpapa," shrieked Marjorie with energy in the seigneur's deaf ear.

"Then, in one sense, Mr. Arbuthnot is to be congratulated, for Cambridge is nearer to Newmarket. A bitter blow to the talent that victory of Mademoiselle Ninette's in the One Thousand, last April, was it not?"

"The proverbial uncertainty of fillies retaining their form," said Geoffrey. "The usual reason for strong fielding. Still, the performance of Maydew in the Two Thousand was so good that the odds seemed legitimate."

Geff Arbuthnot cared as much for horse racing as for the native industries of Japan. But the tastes of a man of fourscore must be respected. And with a glance at the Seigneur of Tintajoux you could detect the sporting element, softened, not ungracefully, through a course of sixty years by the learning of the scholar and the quiet life of the priest.

"You come over to England, of course, sir, for the big events of the year?"

"Not I, not I. When you arrive at the age of a hundred you will find yourself content with newspaper reports of most human goings-on, great or small. I have my books about me here, my farm, my dogs, a horse or two, and my cure of souls. Marjorie, small witch, where are you? Did you not say Mr. Arbuthnot was to take Holy Orders?"

"Mr. Arbuthnot is to cure bodies, not souls."

Marjorie's answer was given in a tone of *altissimo* derision.

Geff put himself through a little exercise of moral arithmetic; the result required being the precise sum of dislike which a man of his age could feel toward a scoffing girl of seventeen, a girl with eyes like Marjorie's, silken black hair, and exquisite hands. It was not, perhaps, so large an amount as one might have looked for.

"An *Æsculapius*," observed the Reverend Andros. "You know the parable, Mr. Arbuthnot? Two stalwart men, Nature and Disease, are fighting. A third man, the Doctor, seizes his club and rushes into the *mêlée*, sometimes hitting Disease and sometimes Nature. You are to be the man with the club."

"I am to be the man with the club," answered Geff, relishing the old seigneur's manner. "As long as I confine myself to the setting of broken bones, sir, I hope to do as little harm as may be."

"The doctors kill us no quicker than they used," admitted Andros Bartrand liberally. "When I was an undergraduate they

relied on their brains, as you do now on your finger-tips, and I believe killed us no quicker. You are an honors' man, of course? At a hundred years old one is naturally ignorant as to the university regulations of the times. I know next to nothing of your Cambridge Triposes. You won your laurels, I assume, among bones and minerals?"

The seigneur's prejudices were mellow and crusted as his own port. A born and passionate lover of classic literature, he regarded the admission of natural science into the universities as a mistake, a sort of shuffle among examiners and Liberal Governments that enabled lowly born classes of men to take high degrees.

"Unfortunately for myself, I did not," said Geff. "When my real college life was over, I saw bread and cheese in a remote perspective, and had to begin bones and minerals from their A B C. In my day I came out eighth," and being exceedingly human, Geff's face flushed a bit, "in the Classical Tripos."

The seigneur put his hand within the young man's arm.

"Come for a walk with me, Mr. Arbuthnot. Eighth in the Classical Tripos—eh! I will point out the limits of my vast estate to you. Marjorie, small witch, go and set ready the tea-table. Mr. Arbuthnot will spend the remainder of the evening with us."

The daylight by now had gone into odorous dew-freshened dusk; a big scintillating planet looked down upon the woods of Tintajoux. Geff felt himself in a new world, a thousand miles removed from pale, work-a-day, prosaic England. The affluence of air and sea, the largeness of sky, took possession of him, played in his blood, evoked that precise condition of mind and body which is so often at four-and-twenty the prelude to human passion.

The talk of Andros Bartrand accorded well with the scene and moment. They spoke of men, measures, books—of books chiefly.

"I belong, really, to the eighteenth century," said the seigneur, as, with his hand on Geff's arm, they paced the lawn's goodly limits.

Old Andros had the vanity of his age in seeking to exaggerate it. He had been known, or so Marjorie would affirm, to speak of himself as alive at the dawn of the French Revolution. Perhaps you appreciated his real age best when you reflected that the bride of his youth might have been a contemporary of Emma Woodhouse! "I was born before moral pulse feeling came into fashion. This modern verse—'singing, maugre the music'—don't please me. I never mix my wines. I like to take my verse and my philosophy separate. Hand-made paper, rough edges, vellum, constitute poetry nowadays, don't they?"

"The æsthetic fever is on us still, sir, I fear."

"In regard to Church matters, I was middled-aged, mind, when Tract 90 decimated the country. Tractarian or Evangelical, Theist or Pantheist—the Church went on quite as profitably before parsons began calling each other by such a variety of names."

"Names that all mean the same thing," Geoffrey suggested, "if men had temper enough to examine them coolly."

"Possibly. Let me direct your attention to my young wheat. You see it in the inclosure, just between that red stable roof and the orchard. I mean to cut my wheat with the Guernsey sickle, Mr. Arbuthnot, the same pattern of sickle, it is believed, that was used under Louis XI. I mean to get more for my wheat, per quarter, than any grower in England. There is the advantage of being a Channel Island farmer. One may not only be a Conservative, but, like certain great statesmen, make one's Conservatism pay."

A resonant call from Marjorie summoned them before long to the tea-table, a meal at which old Andros with his grand-seigneur air made his guest pleasantly welcome. The dinner-hour at Tintajoux was five, the "late dinner" of Andros Bartrand's youth. By half past eight, in this keen Atlantic air, broiled mullet, hot potato scones, with other indigenous Guernsey dishes, were adjuncts to the tea-table which no healthily-minded person could afford to despise. Afterward came a cigar smoked just inside the open French windows. "At a hundred years old," the seigneur apologized, "there was one thing a man might not brave with impunity, night air." And then Geoffrey Arbuthnot prepared to take his leave.

Business-like, he reverted to pounds, shillings, and pence. It was a settled thing that he should read classics and mathematics with Miss Bartrand on three mornings of the week, at the sum (happily the darkness veiled the blushes on Marjorie's face) of six francs an hour.

"Classics and mathematics!" cried old Andros, assenting to the money part of the transaction with suave courtesy. "What will the little witch do with classics and mathematics when she has got them?"

"Enter Newnham or Girton with them, in the first place," answered Marjorie unhesitatingly.

"Newnham or Girton!"

The unfavorable summing-up of all arguments that have been put forth on the subject of woman's higher education was in Andros Bartrand's enunciation of the words.

"Newnham and Girton send forth good men," remarked Geoffrey Arbuthnot. "In the future, sir, when the girls shall 'make Greek lambics; and the boys black-currant jams,' we look forward confidently to seeing Girton head of the river."

"At my age I am unmoved by new theories," said old Andros. "New facts I am not likely to confront. There has never yet been a great woman poet."

"Mrs. Browning, grandpapa."

"Nor a great woman painter."

"Rosa Bonheur."

"Nor a discoverer in science."

"Mrs. Somerville."

"Nor a solitary musical composer."

The girl was silent.

"Yet all these fields have been as open to them as to men, have they not, witch?"

Marjorie Bartrand had passed into the garden. She stood impatiently tapping a slender foot on the turf and looking up, her arms folded, an expression on her face curiously like that of old Andros, at a strip of crescent moon, that showed between the cedar branches.

"A new moon. I courtesy to her, twice, thrice, and I wish a wish!"

"Did you hear my question, witch? In poetry, art, music, have women not had just as ample chances as men?"

"Spanish women have had no chances at all," cried Marjorie, raising her tone, as she adroitly shifted her ground, after the manner of her sex. "For their sake I mean to work—yes, to get to the level of a B.A., grandpapa, in spite of your most withering contempt."

"For the sake of Spain, benighted Spain!" remarked the seigneur genially. "My grand-daughter's blood is half Spanish, Mr. Arbuthnot. I had a son once—an only son—" Could it really be that Andros Bartrand's firm voice for a second faltered? "When he was no longer a young man he went to Cadiz, for health's sake, and married, poor fellow, a Spanish girl who died at the end of the year. Marjorie has stayed a few times among her mother's family, and has gone Spain-crazed, as you will soon find out for yourself."

"Crazed!" rang Marjorie's tuneful voice through the night. "I want to hold my hands out to my own people, yes, to teach, if I ever know anything myself, among the girls of our poor benighted

Spain. And I am proud of my craziness. I thank you for the word, grandpapa. It is the prettiest compliment."

The complexion of the family talk was threatening; Geoffrey Arbuthnot hastened his adieus. But Andros had still a farewell shot to discharge against the little witch.

"Our poor benighted Spain is the one country in Europe with a decent peasantry of its own. Get Mr. Arbuthnot, get any one who understands the matter, to talk to you about the English plowman, and compare the two pictures. The Spanish peasant's wife sews, knits, embroiders, reads her Mass-book and can cook a capital stew. Her drink is water. Infanticide is unknown. The men are hospitable, courteous, dignified. Among benighted people like these, Marjorie Bartrand proposes to preach the benefits of a liberal pauper education as exhibited in England."

By the time the seigneur's ironies came to an end Marjorie's small figure had vanished among the deepening shadows of the lawn. Fearful of losing sight of her altogether—for, indeed, Marjorie Bartrand was suggestive of something weird, sprite-like, and of a nature to take other form at an hour when owls do fly—Geff bade his host a hasty good-night and followed.

The girl herself was invisible, but a clear childish voice chanted the old ditty of Roland somewhere in the neighborhood, "Like steel among weapons, like wax among women." Or, as Marjorie sung with spirit:

"Fuerte qual acero entre armas,
Y qual cera entre las damas."

"I have found my gardening scissors, Mr. Arbuthnot," she cried, emerging through the school-room window, a basket on her arm. "Flowers smell sweetest that are cut with the dew on them. I mean to cut some roses and cherry-pie for—for—"

"Your wife" was on Marjorie's lips, but she stopped herself abruptly, all Cassandra Tighe's warnings about Geoffrey's domestic embarrassments coming back to her.

"Let me help you," said Geoffrey. A minute later Marjorie, on tiptoe, was vainly endeavoring to catch a bow of swaying yellow brier. "You are just one foot too short to reach those roses, Miss Bartrand."

Marjorie sprung up in air. She plunged with bold final grasp among the thorns, and succeeded in getting scratches destined to mark her right hand for some weeks to come; scratches that might, perhaps, recall this moment to both of them in the pauses of some

tough mathematical problem, some arid point in Latin grammar or Greek delectus.

"The result of overvaulting ambition." Thus from his calm altitude of six-foot-one, Geff moralized. "How many roses am I to pick?"

"You are to pick three beauties!" said Marjorie, somewhat crestfallen. "Won't you have the scissors? These briars prick cruelly."

But Geff wanted no scissors; his skin, so he told her, was of about the same texture as a stout dog-skin glove. When the briar-roses were duly laid in Marjorie's basket he put on the grave manner of his profession. It was his duty as a surgeon to make immediate inspection of her injuries.

"You are losing a good deal of blood, Miss Bartrand." Taking both her hands, he held them up, in the streak of moonlight, not very distant from his lips. "But while there is life there is hope. Three, four, deep wounds! For my sake, don't faint, if you can help it."

"Faint!" Marjorie's laugh was a thing good to hear; a thing fresh as the chatter of birds in April, pungent as the smell of new-turned earth. "I wonder whether any of the old Bartrands ever fainted. I mean, *before* they were guillotined! Confess, we are queer specimens, grandpapa and I, are we not, sir?" Asking Geff this question, she left her hands in his simply until he should choose to let them go. The first ineffectual coldness of girlhood was on her. She knew no more of passion than did her own roses. "Not very pleasant people to live with—say! in an out-of-the-way Guernsey manoir."

"So much must depend on the taste of him who survived the ordeal." Geoffrey Arbuthnot quietly surrendered the slim hands resting unresponsively in his. "At the present moment life in an out-of-the-way Guernsey manoir seems to me—endurable."

A stronger word was very near escaping Geoffrey Arbuthnot's lips.

"You are taken in by our picturesqueness," said Marjorie with decision. "England must be an astonishingly ugly country, judging from the effect our bit of Channel rock appears to make upon English people. Now, to me, who have seen Spain, it is all so cramped, so sea-weedy. Look away to the left there—sea. To the right—sea. Move a little step nearer—close here, don't be afraid, and look where I point across the moor—sea again. Let

an out-and-out big wave come some day, and the whole nation would be submerged, like Victor Hugo's hero."

The glimpse of silver-gray tranquil moor brought back before Geoffrey the thyme-grown bank, the falcon high poised, the tuft of wood-rush—associated with the last rcse visions of the squalid Barnwell pavements, of the men and women, forced deserters from the army of progress, who dragged out their span of human existence there.

"I should like to know what you are thinking about," Marjorie asked, noting with a child's acumen the changed expression of his face.

"I am thinking about England, about the hard battles some Englishmen and women have to go through with. A night like this," said Geff, "brings sharp thoughts before one of one's own life, one's own uselessness."

In an instant Marjorie was softened. Tears almost rushed to her eyes. Her thoughts, true to her better self, followed Geoffrey's as if by instinct. Then the good impulse passed. It entered her willful head that this excellent young gentleman from Cambridge meant to sermonize her. She resolved to shock him.

"I used to feel goody-goody myself, very long ago. You would not believe it now, but as a child I was pious."

"I believe it thoroughly," answered Geff, grave of countenance.

"When I wanted my lettuce-seed to come up, I would perform little acts of propitiatory contrition to Pouchée, the poor old Pouchée who lives in Cambridge now. When grandpapa went out shooting I carried his game-bag, and used to offer fervent prayers, whenever the dogs came to a point, that he might kill his bird. Facts undermined my faith. Sometimes the point was false. Sometimes grandpapa missed his aim. Chaffinches and slugs ate my lettuce-seed. I turned infidel. I have remained one. Grandpapa says I have the hardest flint soul in, or out of, Christendom. Still, that is one Bartrand judging of another."

"I am not a Bartrand," remarked Geff Arbuthnot. "I do not think you have a hard flint soul. You believe in wishes addressed to a strip of new moon, for instance?"

They were standing at the highest point of Tintajoux; a small plateau, the approach to which was fashioned on the exploded system of puzzle or maze. Long before Marjorie's life-time this plateau—who shall say on what morning of youthful human hope—had been christened Arcadia! The country-folk around Tintajoux called it Arcadia still. Cool draughts of air were stirring from the moor-

land. They brought fragrance of distant hayfields, honeyed whiffs of the syringa hedges that formed the mazes. Would Marjorie ever courtesy to future moons without the scent of hay, the oversweetness of blown syringa returning on her senses?

"Some day," observed Geff, as she maintained a caustic silence, "I mean you to tell me what you wished for, a quarter of an hour ago, under the cedars."

Marjorie Bartrand turned from him, the determination of a long lineage of dead, high-tempered Bartrands on her face. To command, implied or spoken had she never yet bowed, during her seventeen years of life, without asking the reason why.

She asked nothing now. Her cheeks—happily, the starlight betrayed no secrets—were glowing damask. For the girl knew, deep in her fiery heart, what the wish was: a wish by no means unconnected with her feelings toward Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE BRINK OF A FLIRTATION.

MEANWHILE the solstice night grew at each instant more purple, more mysterious. Geff felt himself in love with midsummer starlight, with Guernsey, with Tintajoux. Marjorie he would fain have engaged for a game of hide-and-seek among the neighboring orchards, or of follow-my-leader along the beach, white in the crescent moon's shining. For what was this poor small heiress but a child, with a child's cold, sweet, unopened heart, a child's quick temper, a child's readiness for play, in whatever shape play might happen to be offered her!

"You will not tell me your wish, to-night, Miss Bartrand. Never mind. You will tell it me some day. To show you I bear no malice, you shall hear mine. My present wish, as I *must* leave Tintajoux, is to return to Miller's Hotel by the longest road possible. You could point it out to me."

"I should rather think so!" cried Marjorie brusquely. "If you don't mind a quarter of an hour's nice hard scramble, your plan is to go up the Gros Nez cliffs, about a mile from this, and so back to your hotel along the edge of the steep. You are tolerably steady on the legs, I suppose?"

Tolerably! A too shallow purse, a too well endowed brain had combined to force Geoffrey Arbuthnot out of the ranks of the big

and world-renowned athletes. But ask the All England football team, ask the men against whom the All England football team has played, if Arbuthnot of John's be tolerably steady on his legs.

"I don't know that I am unusually feeble, Miss Bartrand. My weakness, perhaps, is more of the nerves than the limbs. Point out some path to me that you and the seigneur are in the habit of treading, assure me, on your honor, that you think that path safe, and perhaps I shall have courage to attempt it."

"Well, when you get free of Tintajoux you must go straight across the corner of the moor to Les Hûets. At the end of a few hundred yards you will find four water-lanes meet. You must take the one that seems to lead away from Petersport and follow it until you get to Tibot. You know Tibot, of course?"

"I am shamefully ignorant, Miss Bartrand. I do not know Tibot."

"After that, a brisk two minutes' down, down, through spongy wet earth churning at every step over your ankles, brings you to the shore. Right in face of you are the Gros Nez heights, and if you get to the top all right (even in broad day it is not considered a very safe climb for strangers), your road home will lie straight before you, along the edge of the cliffs."

Geff Arbuthnot clasped his forehead.

"When I get clear of Tintajoux I must go across the moor to an unpronounceable place where four water-lanes meet. Of these I must choose the one that looks least likely to lead anywhere. Then down, down, through spongy wet earth churning up to my ankles at every step, until I catch sight of the cliffs where I shall finally break my neck. Miss Bartrand, will you allow me to ask a favor?"

"Doubtless." A gleam of white teeth showed the heartiness of the girl's amusement. "It rests with me, though," she added maliciously, "to say 'yes' or 'no' to it."

"Unfortunately it rests always with feminine caprice to say 'yes' or 'no' to the proposals made by men."

The hour, or the moonlight, or some curiously occult and unknown influence must have been telling on Arbuthnot of John's. He stood on the brink of a flirtation.

"As you may have proved to your cost, sir," thought Marjorie, not quite without a movement of pity. "As you may have proved in that hour—I wonder how many years ago—when the Devonshire peasant girl decided on becoming Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot."

"And my proposal is that you come with me, at least as far as the unpronounceable meeting of the water-lanes; start me on my

downward spongy way to the sea, and then, unless I descend too quickly from the Gros Nez cliffs, I shall have a fair chance of finding my road home."

To an agonized wife! It might be—so mixed is human happiness, thought Marjorie ironically—to the least little domestic lecture on the subject of late hours.

"Feminine caprice," she observed gravely, "is in your favor for once, Mr. Arbuthnot. I will look after your interests as far as Tibot. After that, your fate will be in your own hands. On the outside chance of your getting back alive to your hotel, I may as well present you with some rather better flowers."

She flitted about, moth-fashion, from one garden-plot to another, ever rifling the choicest and sweetest bloom of each for her basket. Afterward, the lodge gates passed, she accompanied Geoffrey across a strip of common land and down a few hundred yards of darksome lane to the Hûets, from which point the trickle of a little moorland stream guided them to Tibot. Here, emerging into such light as the young moon yielded, the moment came for bidding good-night. And here an exceedingly delicate question in social tactics presented itself with force to Marjorie's attention. What decorous but strictly indirect message ought to accompany her gift of flowers to Geoffrey Arbuthnot's wife?

"You don't mind carrying things, I hope, sir, as long as they are not from the butcher's, or done up in a brown paper parcel? Guernsey is not Cambridge, you know. Grandpapa and I carry everything on the end of our walking-stick, from a conger-eel downward."

"I will carry a conger-eel for you, any day, with delight," said Geoffrey.

"I shall remember that speech. I shall present you with a conger-eel four feet long, in the market, and watch to see you carry him to your hotel. To-night I only want you to take these flowers for me to—to some one in the town," observed Marjorie, with staid composure.

But she was in no courageous mood, really. She listened, as though she would ask counsel of it, to the familiar little black-veined moor stream, eddying away with chill, clear voice to the sea.

"You have only to command me," said Geoffrey, with an absurd, a reasonless sense of personal disappointment, "and I obey. The address of your friend is—"

"You will have no difficulty about the address. Indeed, I am

afraid," stammered Marjorie, "that at present, for another few days, I have scarcely a right to speak of the person as my friend. The difficulty is, sir, how will you carry the flowers? In your hands, you say! A man who would climb Gros Nez cliffs must pretty nearly hang on by his eyelashes, like the heroes in Jules Verne's stories; at times he wants as firm a grip, I can tell you, as all his ten fingers can give."

"If I surmount these terrific perils, if I reach Petersport safely, your flowers will share my fate. Don't be anxious about them, Miss Bartrand."

Marjorie paused, her face set and thoughtful. After a minute or two, with the unconsciousness of self, the ignorance of possible misconstruction which rendered her actions so absolutely the actions of a child, she unloosened her waist ribbon. A length of twine lay in her basket. With this she bound the flower stalks firmly together, then knotting her ribbon, she attached it in a long loop to the bouquet.

"Before setting foot on the cliffs you must pass the loop round your neck—so." For Geff's better guidance she pantomimed her instructions round her own girlish throat. "By that contrivance you leave your hands free. And you must take care of my ribbon if you please, sir, and bring it back next lesson. It is a bit of real Spanish peasant ribbon one of my cousins bought for me in Cadiz. A thing not to be replaced in these parts of the world. Good-night, Mr. Arbuthnot."

"You have not said half enough. You have not even told me whom your flowers are for."

"My flowers are for a person I hope, before long, to know and like well."

"The description is tantalizing. It would scarcely furnish me, I fear, with the one name and address of the person wanted, among all the narrow, twisting streets of Petersport."

"The flowers are, Mr. Arbuthnot, can not you guess—for whom they are meant?"

"I am ill at originating ideas, Miss Bartrand. I can guess nothing."

"Because you can not, or will not, which?"

"Because I can not, because I am blankly unimaginative."

For a few moments Marjorie stood masterfully inactive. Then she flew discreetly back into the shadow of the lane. On a slightly rising mound she stopped. What light there was touched the

upper half of her face, and Geoffrey could see her eyes. He knew that her mood, for Marjorie Bartrand, was a softened one.

"The flowers are for yourself, Mr. Arbutnot," so her voice rang through the sea-scented night. "For your better self, you understand. Don't lose my ribbon, and, if you can help it, don't fall over the Gros Nez cliffs. Good-night."

And with a wave of her hand—though he was blankly unimag-jnative, Geoffrey believed it might be with a wafted kiss from her finger-tips—she disappeared.

Geff Arbutnot's first experience in snubbing had come to an end.

Pondering over many things, most of all over the cruelties and caprices of youthful woman, he ran lightly down the ankle-deep water-lane, then across a miniature bay of argent, shell-strewn sands, to the base of Gros Nez cliffs. The ridge rose sheer above his head, a dark wall of over a hundred and fifty feet, polished as glass to the limit of the breakers, but, above that line, fissured, lichened, rough.

Miss Bartrand's sarcasm had not exaggerated the gravity of the ascent. The man who in an uncertain light should successfully scale Gros Nez must have not only his hands and feet but his wits thoroughly under command.

And here the loop of ribbon attached to Marjorie's flowers proved of great use.

I have tried to represent in Geoffrey a man little moved by the nicer shades of cultivated or hot-house feeling, a man more likely to be wrapped up in one grim fact of the mortuary or dissecting-room than in all the pretty uncertainties of sentiment put together. But to-night a change had certainly passed over him. Before beginning his climb he found a delicate pleasure in suspending Marjorie's bouquet, exactly in the mode her fingers had taught him, round his neck. He found a pleasure—the cliff's dizzy height hardly won—in unknottng her ribbon, smoothing it out from its creases with a hand unversed in millinery tasks, finally in hiding it away, jealously, in the breast-pocket of his jacket.

Concerning this jealousy he asked himself neither why nor wherefore. In transitional moments like these an old tender image fading even as a new one rises above the horizon, few of us in our inmost thoughts care to be motive seekers. Geoffrey knew that he would not for an empire have let Dinah see that ribbon to-night, or any other night. He knew that between him and the little girl with carved sweet lips and ebon hair there existed a secret. He knew that

tutoring was a far pleasanter business than he had bargained for, also that the flowers Marjorie had given him, and which he carried in his hand, smelled of Tintajoux.

But he took out his embroidered tobacco pouch, his short black brier, notwithstanding. He smoked his cavendish vigorously as he trudged back to Petersport. Arbuthnot of John's might stand on the brink of a flirtation. He was not as yet in a state that need occasion a man's stanchest bachelor friends anxiety.

CHAPTER VIII.

CROSS-STITCH.

DINAH was still busied over her embroidery frame when Geoffrey's entrance brought the coolness of the night, the wholesome odor of heliotropes and roses, into the chronically dinner-oppressed atmosphere of Miller's Hotel.

Her blonde youthful face looked weary. The lightless, far-away expression, which you may always observe as a result of unshed tears, was in the glance she lifted to Geoff.

"What, you are up still! Do you know that it is past eleven, Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

Four years ago, when Geoffrey first saw Gaston and Dinah in the bloom of wedded happiness not two months old, it was decreed by Gaston, least jealous of men, that his wife and cousin should call each other by their Christian names.

Upon Dinah's joyous lips Geoffrey, without an effort, became at once a familiar household word—dear good old Geoff, through whom, obliquely, her introduction to the husband she passionately loved had come about!

But Geoffrey, after a few stammering, painful efforts, abandoned the calling of Dinah by her Christian name forever.

He could and did call her so, to Gaston only. He intended to stand by her heroically, absent, or in her presence, intended, God helping him, to be the good brotherly influence of her life and of her husband's. Looking upon the eyes that met his with such cruel self-possession, upon the lips which he had once madly coveted to press, Geoffrey Arbuthnot realized that he could never feel toward Dinah as a brother feels. He resolved that his speech, knowingly, should not play traitor to his heart. Gaston's wife must, for him, be coldly, stiffly, conventionally, "Mrs. Arbuthnot," until his life's end.

"Yes, I am up still, Geff. There's no chance of seeing Gaston till long past midnight. A lady like Mrs. Thorne, accustomed to India and Indian military society," said Dinah, "would be sure to keep late hours. So I thought I would shade my poppies straight through. I must wait for daylight to put in the pinks and scarlets."

Crossing to the table where Dinah was laboriously stitching, Geoffrey seated himself at her side. He looked attentively down at her work with those acute, deep-browed gray eyes of his.

"Your embroidery is very—" he was about to say "beautiful," but checked himself. The star-strewn night, the hay-scents along the cliffs, the roses of Tintajoux were in his soul, lifting it above sympathy with poor Dinah's wool-work. "Your embroidery is very delicate and smooth," he went on truthfully. "And how quick you are about it! You only began the top yellow rose when I stayed with you and Gaston, I recollect, last Easter."

Dinah's pieces of work were on a scale that carried one back to the female industry of the Middle Ages, yet was their ultimate use nebulous. Vast ottomans, vast cushions, yards of curtain border, simply a mansion. And the Arbuthnot's mansion at present existed not. But on what else should a childless woman, cut off from household duties, not over fond of books, forlornly destitute of acquaintance, and with an ever absent husband, employ herself?

Once, long ago, the poor girl made Gaston a set of shirts, as a birthday surprise. These shirts were lovingly, exquisitely stitched, as Dinah Thurston had been taught to stitch in her childhood. They were also a consummate failure. As a monument of patience, he observed, they were beyond praise. As a fit—"Well," said Gaston, kissing her cheek in careless gratitude, "it is not a case of Eureka."

He never wore them, never knew on what day, in what manner, his wife, fired by sharp disappointment, got them out of existence. Simply, the shirts did not adjust themselves well round his, Gaston Arbuthnot's, shapely throat. It was not a case of Eureka. The subject interested him no further.

Plain sewing for grown men and women, Dinah promptly decided, was fruitless labor. Of dress-making proper, Gaston would never (excusably, perhaps) suffer a trace in his rooms. And so, the sweet fashioning of tiny children's clothes not belonging to her lot, Dinah Arbuthnot it would seem had no choice, no refuge on the planet she inhabited, but cross-stitch.

At moments of more than common loneliness she would feel that

her life was being recorded—mournfully, for a life of two-and-twenty—in these large and not artistic embroideries. I seemed as though she stitched with a double thread, as though a dull strand of autobiography forever intertwined itself among the flaunting roses, the impossible auriculas and poppies that grew beneath her hands.

The piece at which she now worked was begun in London, at a time when Gaston used to dine out regularly every night of his life, and when his days, from various art callings, were, perforce, spent apart from her. As Geoffrey spoke, she could see her St. John's Wood lodging, her afternoon walks in the Regent's Park, worked gloomily in with every shade of those topmost yellow roses. After London came a short stay at Weymouth. Here Gaston had a "convict study" to make, on order, and with his usual good luck, discovered he knew several capital fellows in the regiment quartered at Portland. The capital fellows naturally delighted in having the versatile artist at mess, and Dinah passed almost as many lonely evenings as she had done in London. It was in Weymouth, she remembered, that her auriculas, her impossible auriculas, began to take color and shape. And now, in Guernsey—

The heavy drops gathered in Dinah Arbuthnot's eyes; pushing her work frame away, she turned to Geoffrey. The lamp shone on her full. The delicate outlines of her cheek and throat stood out before him in startling whiteness.

"And so you have come back from your coaching, Geff." Her tone was quiet. Long practice had taught Dinah to repress that sound detested by Gaston—as by all husbands—tears in the voice. "How do you like the sensation of being snubbed by an heiress?"

"Pretty well, I thank you," said Geff. "Snubbing, as you know, Mrs. Arbuthnot, is a sensation I got used to in my youth."

"Was the heiress very bad? Did she make you feel miserably uncomfortable?"

"No, I can not go so far as that. I can not say that I felt miserably uncomfortable."

"But you didn't care for her? If you keep the work on, it will not be for pleasure?"

Dinah's heart was fuller than it could hold with love for her husband. Geoffrey was nothing to her, except the best friend that she and Gaston possessed. Yet she asked this question quickly, with interest. In her secret consciousness, it was an accepted fear, perhaps, though Dinah knew it not, that Geoffrey would never care, as men care who mean to marry, for any girl.

"Work that is to be decently done must always be done for pleasure."

It was Geff Arbuthnot who uttered the aphorism.

"And your evening, snubbing and all, has been passed pleasantly?"

"I have breathed ampler air," Geoffrey made evasive apology, man-like. "I have seen more blue sea and sky than ever in my life before. Miss Bartrand's snubbing was—not beyond my strength. The Seigneur of Tintajoux is a specimen of the old scholarly, high-and-dry parson, worth walking any number of Guernsey miles to see. Some day, Mrs. Arbuthnot, I shall take you with me to Tintajoux."

"To come in for my share of snubbing, too?"

Dinah asked the question, faintly coloring.

"Marjorie is a frank, generous hearted child. You can not think of her in the light of a grown-up woman. She is a Bartrand, with the faults and virtues of her inheritance; the faults—pride and temper—visibly on the surface. I am very sure," added Geff, bending his head, as though to examine the intricate shading of Dinah's poppies, "that you and Marjorie Bartrand might be fast friends, if you chose."

"I have no friends," said Dinah, "except my own people, down home," of whom, in truth, Gaston allowed her to see little enough, "and—and you, Geff."

The voice was unfaltering, the full good mouth was steady. Dinah made the admission, not as a matter of complaint, but of fact, and Geoffrey's heart fired.

"That 'friendlessness' is the one huge mistake of your life," he exclaimed. "Gaston is not selfish, would not be selfish, unless your unselfishness forced him into being so. You should never have allowed this morbid love of solitude to grow on you. You ought to assert yourself, to go into the world at Gaston's side, whether you like it or not."

"I should not like it now. When I was a girl, when we first married, my heart was light, against what it is now. It was the end of the London season, you remember. No, I don't suppose you do?"

Does he not, though—that late, July time when, after seeing the marriage ceremony over, he went back to his scholar's attic in John's; that Long Vacation when the skies were brazen to him, when day and night alike were one feverish pain!

"It was the end of the London season, and when Gaston took

me to the Opera and twice down to dinner at Richmond, I did feel," confessed Dinah with humility. "that I had it in me to be fond of junketing—oh, Geff, there's one of my country words! luckily Gaston can't hear it—of pleasure, I mean, and society. But the taste has died." Of what lingering, cruel death, who should know better than Geoffrey! "Ladies of my husband's class have not called upon me. I have neither rank, talent, nor a million. Without these, Gaston says, no woman can make her way in the English world."

Hot words were ready to rush from Geoffrey's lips, but he kept them back. To remain on equal terms with husband and wife in this strange triangular friendship, did sorely tax his powers of self-repression, at times.

"Gaston would rejoice in knowing that your life was cheerfuler, no matter how the cheerfulness was brought about. He has told me so, often. Now, here, in Guernsey, eight sea-going hours removed," said Geff, lightly, "from English Philistinism, what should hinder you from joining in any little bit of 'junketing' that may offer itself?"

"The hinderance of having no introduction to the Guernsey ladies."

"Mrs. Thorne has called on you."

"On Gaston. He is dining with them now. He will dine with them four evenings a week. Yes," Dinah's voice fell, "I know, at a glance, the kind of clever person who will amuse my husband. Mrs. Thorne is one of them. She is magnetic."

"With the magnetism that repels rather than attracts," remarked Geff.

"That is your feeling about her. You and Gaston would be safe not to admire the same woman."

Geoffrey Arbuthnot was mute. Although his face was too sun-burned to admit of visible deepening in hue, it may be that just then Geoffrey Arbuthnot blushed.

"You have no change in your character. You could be content (a happy thing for your wife, whenever Mrs. Geoffrey appears on the scene) with one mood, one voice, one face, day after day, before you for forty years. Is not that true?"

"I am not an artist," said Geff, after a pause. "For a humdrum man, prosaically occupied, the one face, Mrs. Arbuthnot, the one voice"—ah, fool that he was! his own voice trembled—"might constitute as much happiness as we are likely to taste, any of us this side death."

"And Gaston is an artist in every fiber." Poor Dinah's estimate of Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot was invariably Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot's, except that she believed in him a vast deal more than he believed in himself. "I ought to know that my dull days, my silent evenings, are matters of course. It is not Gaston's fault that he can only get inspiration through change. Some day, when the world is bowing down before a really great work of his, my hour of triumph will come. Who knows, Geoff, if Gaston had married in his own class, if he and his wife had led just the usual life of people in society—it may be his genius would not have fared so well!"

Dinah never looked more perilously lovely than when, with flushed cheeks and kindling eyes, she spoke aloud of her ambitions for her husband. The poor girl's whole life lay in her one, passionate, oft-bruised affection. More than common beauty, a look of divine, all-hoping, all-forgiving love, shone on her face at this instant.

Geoff Arbuthnot recollected it wanted only ten seconds to midnight, and that he must fly. Had not long habit trained him to recognize the moment when flight was his surest, his only wisdom!

"You and Gaston understand each other, as no third person can hope to do, Mrs. Arbuthnot. I consider you the two happiest mortals alive, though perhaps you do not know the extent of your own happiness."

"And you are off to your pillow, to dream of the heiress who has not snubbed you," said Dinah, as he moved from her side. "Why, Geoff!" For the first time she caught sight of the bouquet, somewhat cunningly held in shadow, hitherto. "What roses, what jasmines, what heliotropes! I have been wondering all this time what made the room so sweet."

And speaking thus, she stretched forth her hand for Marjorie Bartrand's flowers.

During nearly four years, a portentously large slice of life under five-and-twenty, it had been one long case of give-and-take between Geoffrey and Dinah, the "take" invariably on Dinah's side. She took his heart from him to start with. She took the happiness out of his youth. Silently, unrecognized, Geoffrey constituted himself her knight-errant in the hour of his own sharpest pain. (Till her death Dinah could never know the part played by Geoffrey at the time of her engagement and marriage.) In a hundred ways he had since steadied her husband in the path of right. By a hundred unselfish actions he had smoothed nascent domestic discontents, any one of which might have worked mortal havoc with Dinah's peace.

She had received all his devotion—a prevalent weakness, it is to be feared, among gentle, unimaginative women of her type—as the simplest thing in the world!

It Dinah, as once there was promise, had had children, doubt not that her moral nature must have widened. But this was not to be. A tiny, dying creature held between weak arms for half a day; some yellowing, never-used baby-clothes, jealously hidden out of Gaston's sight; a kiss stolen, when her husband was not by to see, from any fair cottage babe she might chance to come across in her walk—this much, and no more, was Dinah to know of motherhood.

And the love blindly centered on Gaston had in it an element which, although the word is hard, must in justice be called selfishness.

"Nothing Gaston likes so well as the smell of flowers on his breakfast table." And Dinah still carelessly held out her hand in a receptive attitude. "He says his brain must be like the brains of dogs or deer—smell colors all his thoughts. You will see, Geff! Those heliotropes and roses will just set him kneading some new idea into clay to-morrow morning."

But the heliotropes and the roses did not quit Geoffrey's hand.

In this moment, ay, while Dinah was speaking, a current of new, keen, healthful life had swept through him. He felt more thoroughly master of himself than he had done since that May evening when he first blindly surrendered his will, with his heart, to a blonde girl watering flowers through a casement window at Lesser Cheriton. Marjorie's roses, fresh from her pure touch, a friendly gift from the world-scorning child who, somehow, looked upon her tutor as out of the scope of scorn, were his. If Gaston needed inspiration from flower-scents, Doctor Thorne's garden, any other garden than that of the Seigneur of Tintajeux, must supply the inspiration.

He made a dexterous exit, rushed away, boy-fashion, light of spirit, three steps at a time, to his own room. And before half a minute was over Dinah Arbuthnot had forgotten him. Poor old faithful Geff, his lesson giving, his heiress, his bouquet—what were these, nay, what were the alien concerns of the universe to a pathetically tender soul, quick smarting under its own immediate and narrow pain!

Had Linda Thorne the power of holding an artist's restless fancy captive, the genius of making time pass swiftly, the talent of clever talk, of giving genial little dinners, of dressing perfectly? Above all, was she a woman to expect nothing whatever in return for her

devotion? A woman, strong enough to be philosophical, even, toward a rival who should vanquish her, in her own world, with her own weapons? If she were thus gifted—Dinah moved to the window and looked out across the hotel garden to a point between an opening in the trees where the sea showed blue and foamless—if Linda Thorne were thus gifted, then might to-night be taken as a foretaste of what the next six weeks, the bloom and glory of a mid-Channel summer, had in store for herself.

CHAPTER IX.

HALF WAY TOWARD LITTLE GO.

"SIXTIES" and "forties" are traditions, happily of the past. Although Sarnian spinsters may still go cut to tea with a maid and a hand-lantern, the number of their candles is no longer a rigorous type of their social condition.

But the society of an island, twelve miles long by four broad, must always be cousin-german to the society of a ship. Wherever choice is circumscribed, human nature tends to eclecticism. Sixties and forties may have had their day. A stranger is amazed, still, at the number of island families who do not visit other island families, seemingly from hereditary topographical reasons. The Eastern people have not much to say to those of the West. The country districts hold scanty intercourse with the townsfolk.

At the time I write of, the remote little peninsula of Tintajeux was probably the most exclusive parish in the island.

"While we were on terms with the Rector of Noirmont we had four people in our set," Marjorie would say. "The Rector of Noirmont, his wife, the Seigneur of Tintajeux, Marjorie Bertrand. Since grandpapa and Mr. Noirmont had their big Latin fight we have split up into further faction. Our set consists of the Seigneur of Tintajeux and Marjorie Bertrand. We are a nation of two."

Of the things done and left undone by the Petersport inhabitants, this nation of two was oftentimes as ignorant as though some dark continent divided them. The dances, picnics, military bands, garden-parties, and general gossip of urban life, concerned the Bertrands languidly. Old Andros had his farming, his dogs, his classic authors, and a curiously mixed performance which he called parochial work, to occupy him. Marjorie had her study, a boat, fishing-tackle, gardening tools; in days not so very far distant, had

a carpenter's bench; all the wholesome outdoor interests of a country-nurtured child. If Cassandra Tighe chanced occasionally to rattle round in her village cart and communicate to them the last town news, they heard it: rarely, otherwise.

It thus happened, Cassandra remaining away with her nets and her sea-monsters in Sark, that the comedy in course of rehearsal between Geff and Marjorie went on for several days without interruption. The master and pupil met seldom, save during the hours of work, when Geff, professionally severe, discouraged idle conversation. It did not become easier to Marjorie than it had seemed on the first night of their acquaintance to say the words, Your wife. The terms on which they met were frank; slightly stiffer, perhaps under the broad sun of noon than they had been among the syringa blossoms by starlight! They stood, on the outside at least, in the position of any commonly dense freshman, and of a coach, conscientiously minded to get his man, if possible, through Previous.

On the outside. Growing to know Marjorie's transparent nature better and better, deriving keen refreshment from the badly trained, fine intelligence which might have risen so high above the commonly dense freshman's level, Geoffrey grew, hourly, more sensible that their seasons for meeting were "ower lang o' comin'," that each intervening day was a space of time to be lived through! At this point stood Geff. Secure, she was fain to think contented, in the knowledge of a Mrs. Arbuthnot's existence, Marjorie worked with an unstinted zeal, a vivid delight, such as the whole defunct race of governesses, morning or resident, had failed to awaken in her.

So things progressed through half a dozen lessons. Then, one sunless afternoon, sky and sea and speck of island painted in half-tones, misty, dubious as the happiness of human life, came the rattle as of a score of chained captives along the avenue of Tintajoux. Marjorie, pacing up and down the school-room as she boldly struggled with the irregularities of a Greek verb, recognized the sound of Cassandra's cart-wheels. Pushing Delectus and exercise books aside, she ran forth joyfully to meet her friend. Had not important news to be told? Our Cambridge B.A. thinking good things possible in the direction of Girton, the emancipation of those benighted Spanish women, who only know how to manage their house or fold their mantilla gracefully, a few prospective inches advanced!

"You are inkier than ever, Marjorie Bartrand."

This was Miss Tighe's first personal observation, thrown back

over her shoulder as she knotted Midge, the unkempt Brittany pony, to a rail, with one of the sundry odds and ends of rope stowed away in readiness within that all containing cart of hers.

"Only about the wrists," Marjorie pleaded, holding out the sleeve of her holland pinafore.

"But I don't see that university teaching puts flesh on your bones. You are growing too much like that picture of your mother. Eyes are all very well, especially handsome ones, but one wants something more than eyes in a face. You should have done much better"—who shall say Cassandra was not right—"much better to come with Annette and me to Sark, jelly-fish hunting."

The speech gave an impression of being double-shotted. But Marjorie with unwonted meekness made no retort until she and her visitor were within shelter of the drawing-room. There, in the familiar presence of the buhl Cupids, of the miniature Bartrands, who had danced, loved or hated each other, and gone to the guillotine with such easy grace, the girl felt herself protected—oh, Marjorie, from what dim vision of a sin could that white soul need protection? She began the story of her days, and of her intercourse with Geff Arbuthnot, bravely.

"I feel half-way toward Little Go, Miss Tighe. I get my six hours' teaching a week, and—"

"You have always had teaching in abundance," remarked Cassandra, willfully misinterpreting her. "Since you were twelve, you have had Madame Briquebec six hours a week."

"Madame Briquebec—a music mistress!"

"Six hours' lessons, and twelve hours' practice. It would require a Cambridge mathematician," observed Cassandra, "to reckon how many years' solid capital, out of a life-time, are given by young women to such an instrument as the piano!"

"I am not talking of the piano, as you know, Miss Tighe," cried Marjorie, the heart within her rallying at the scent of coming strife.

"I never practiced less for poor old Madame Briquebec than I do now. I talk of my six hours' solid reading with Mr. Arbuthnot."

"Ah! I trust you find Mr. Arbuthnot solidly satisfactory?"

"My tutor thinks well of my staying power. Mr. Arbuthnot sees no reason why, if I gave my life up to it for four years, I should not, some day, come out low in a Tripes."

"Mr. Arbuthnot, like the rest of the world, knows, perhaps, upon which side his bread is buttered."

The suggestion was Cassandra's.

"Bread—buttered! Let me tell you, ma'am, I think that a most

harsh speech! Yes!" cried Marjorie Bartrand, her face aflame, "and verging on spiteful. A speech most unworthy of Cassandra Tighe."

"To my mind the subject scarcely necessitates so much indignation, Marjorie."

"And to mine it does. If you implied anything, it must be that Mr. Arbuthnot flatters me from motives of self-interest, which is vile."

Old Cassandra took off her leather driving gloves; she pressed cut their folds slowly. Then she examined a signet-ring, masculine in size and device, which was always worn by her on the third finger of the left hand.

"Mr. Arbuthnot comes to visit you, professionally, three days a week." Speaking thus she did not lift her eyes to the young girl's face. "He comes to Tintajoux at other times, naturally?"

"He came on that first evening when we engaged him—I mean when Mr. Arbuthnot was good enough to promise to read with me. It was fine warm weather, you must remember—the night before you left for Sark. Grandpapa invited Mr. Arbuthnot to drink tea with us, and afterward I walked as far as the Hûets, to put him on the right track for getting home by Gros Nez."

"He speaks to you, frequently, of the poor, stay-at-home Gri. selda wife, I make no doubt."

The blood rose up, less at the question than at Cassandra's way of putting it, to Marjorie's cheeks.

"My tutor has never spoken to me of Mrs. Arbuthnot. You decided, Miss Tighe, that day when we talked it over under the cedars, that there might be an indelicacy in my mentioning her too abruptly. And during our hours of reading we work, and work hard. I think," said Marjorie, lifting her small face aloft, "that as regards the learning of classics and Euclid, it matters nothing to me whether Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot stay at home or walk abroad."

"Mrs. *Geoffrey*!" repeated Cassandra. "Oh, that, certainly, is not the name. I may have led you wrong in the first instance. Geoffrey is not the name of the man people talk so much about."

Marjorie walked off to the school-room, from whence she presently returned with Geoffrey's card, one that he had inclosed in his first stiff business note to the heiress of Tintajoux.

"Samson, Samuel, Cyril. I am nearly sure of Samson," mused Cassandra. "Accuracy as to names and dates was a kind of heirloom in our family."

"The name of my coach is Geoffrey," said Marjorie Bartrand.

"Behold it, Miss Tighe, in black and white—Geoffrey Arbuthnot, B.A., Cantab."

"I can not make this out at all. The whole thing is so fresh in my memory. Coming up from the harbor I called in at Miller's. It was but human to ask that poor, weak, unreliable woman about her throat. Well, although she has swallowed Dr. Thorne's drugs, Marjorie, she is recovering. Nature is so perverse in these chronic invalids."

"Recovering sufficiently to retail a fruity bit of gossip, which Miss Tighe enjoyed. I wonder whether the world was as scandal-loving in *your* days?" said Marjorie, addressing the calm-eyed group of Bartrands beside the chimney-piece. "You were not a moral generation. Perhaps when glass heads were universal, stone-throwing was less in vogue."

"Poor Mrs. Miller threw no stones. She told me plain and sad facts about these young Arbuthnot people. The husband forever philandering in the train of certain idle ladies belonging to our island society, the wife watching up for him till all hours of the morning, people, very naturally, speculating right and left—"

But Cassandra Tighe stopped short. Like an arrow from a bow Marjorie's slip of a figure had shot across the drawing-room. She stood at her old friend's knee. A pair of eyes glowing with all the force of strong, fiery, yet most generous temper, looked down upon Cassandra's face.

"I hate the speculations of malicious tongues, Miss Tighe. I will never believe that Geoffrey Arbuthnot 'philanders,' whatever the term means, or treats his wife neglectfully. I know him to be manly, straightforward, true. I think Griselda ought to be happy, oh! Lappy quite beyond the common lot."

The last words were not uttered without a quiver of Marjorie Bartrand's lip.

Miss Tighe finished, we may well believe, with the theme of love and lovers some thirty-five or forty years before the present time. Was the subject ever of vital personal moment to her? A jealously worn signet-ring, the portrait of a scarlet-coated, dark-eyed lad that hung in her drawing-room, were the only evidence to warrant intimate friends in hazarding a tentative "yes." Her present interests, said the people of a young and irreverent generation, were of fish, fishy. Are fibers discernible under the microscope in a dogfish's brain? Can a mollusc see, or only distinguish, between light and darkness? One thing was certain. In Cassandra Tighe's breast lingered all tender, all womanly sympathy in the troubles of

humanity at large. And something in Marjorie's voice touched her, not to distrust, but compassion. She looked, with the pain that is half foreboding, at the young girl's ardent, indignant face.

"Marjorie Bartrand, we are old friends. You always take the lectures I give you in good part."

"I may do so occasionally, Miss Tighe, very occasionally. Let us keep to facts."

"I hope you will take a little lecture in good part, now. Drive to Petersport to-morrow, and call on Mrs. Samson Arbuthnot."

"Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot. With so many fables afloat, let us snatch, ma'am, pray, at whatever truth we may."

"Mrs. Geoffrey if you choose. Although my conviction is unshaken. Drive in to Petersport to-morrow. Call upon your tutor's wife. Remember her want of birth and education, imagine a little excusable jealousy. Put yourself, in short, in her place, and I am sure your good heart—"

"I have no heart. Grandpapa, the whole of my governesses, have impressed that upon me often."

"Your good common sense, then, will teach you how you can best befriend her. That is my lecture."

Marjorie moved away into the nearest window. She looked out, athwart garden, orchard, moor, toward the Atlantic, gray, sullen, as though the season had gone back from June to December. A sense of deeply wounded pride, of cruel, inexplicable disappointment mingled in the girl's heart.

"I ought to have done the right thing," so she communed with herself. "I ought to have done it at once. I have just drifted into meanness. As though it could matter to us Bartrands if every woman in the island declined to call on Mrs. Arbuthnot. It was you, Miss Tighe," she turned round incisively on Cassandra, "who preached to me the gospel of Mammon."

"And one hears such nice things said of her, poor dear. The faults are so obviously the husband's. Really, if I could have known all one knows now, my wisest advice would have been—keep clear of them both! In these prickly affairs, in anything connected with a *mésalliance*, you are pretty sure to get your hand stung, whichever way you grasp your nettle."

"Too late in the day for pensive regrets, Miss Tighe. I have not kept clear of Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot."

"The more the pity. As matters stand, Marjorie, I know that your conduct will be full of the sweetest tact. We have a few old-fashioned rules," said good, well-meaning Cassandra, "to guide us

in our perplexities. The first is, to do unto others as we would they should do unto us."

"To-day is not Sunday." Marjorie's foot tapped a quick little tune on the polished floor. "Please don't let us have Sunday talk."

"How should we feel if we were Mrs. Arbuthnot? If you were Mrs. Arbuthnot, how would you wish Marjorie Bartrand should do unto you?"

Cassandra's tone was plaintively sentimental, infallible tone of all to stir up mischief, never far from the surface, in Marjorie Bartrand's heart.

"How should I feel if I were Mrs. Arbuthnot? Wish that I had my precious liberty back, of course, and envy every girl I met hers—the natural feelings, one would hope, of all well-conducted, sensible married women. Ah," ejaculated Marjorie, folding her lithe arms, and with darkness like that of a swiftly gathered thunder-cloud on her Southern face, "and to hear people talk as though such things as roaming husbands and weeping wives were *necessities*, as though the doom of the serpent was laid upon every son and daughter of Adam. A Dieu ne pla'se that it should be so! There is one girl," striking her breast emphatically, "in Her British Majesty's dominions who will shed tears for no man while she lives!"

"We will hope so, Marjorie," said Cassandra, as she put on her driving gloves. "A good many of us have held the same opinions at seventeen, and yet had occasion to modify them later on."

CHAPTER X.

"THEY SAY—"

BUT the thunder-shower soon broke, the blue sky showed beyond. Tears Marjorie Bartrand shed none. What sorrows had she of her own, what sweetheart, philandering or otherwise, to weep for? In regard of Geoffrey's unknown wife, her brief-lived cynicism shifted, ere Cassandra had been gone an hour, into most genuine, most girl-like pity. After an outburst of temper, however scornful or unjust, there was ever in Marjorie's heart a pungent and fiery fidelity which led her back, straight as magnet to steel, to her better self.

That she should be disappointed in Geoffrey's character was, she told herself, inevitable. What is there in any man that one should

not, on close acquaintance, be disappointed in him? She had thought, judging from frank and plainly given confidences, that she knew, to a minute, how her tutor's time was passed here in Guernsey. A little hospital work daily, Geff having met an old college friend in the house surgeon; a little study for his next Cambridge exam.; a good deal of boating; a good many walks round the island; three days a week, his reading with herself at Tintajoux. The picture had been a clear, a pleasant one in Marjorie's sight. And now matter so alien as this of fashionable fine ladies, midnight domestic scenes, idlers speculating right and left, must come, unwelcome and ugly blots, on the canvas.

She was disappointed in Geoffrey, personally. She felt, with the certainty of her age, that she could not work under him again with the bright unblemished interest of the past days. The change of feeling should be made up, Marjorie determined, by kindness shown to his wife. On Mrs. Arbuthnot she pledged herself to call to-morrow. Meantime, yes, during the forenoon lesson she would assume a sterner manner toward this recreant husband, this sober-mannered student who, after all one hoped of him, was so little raised at heart above the pitiful vanities of his sex.

And in the first place her own waist-ribbon must be summarily returned. This was Marjorie's resolve when her head rested on its pillow. The waist-ribbon which, for fear of wounding Geoffrey's feelings (his wife's, perhaps, vicariously), she had suffered her tutor to keep, must be returned. Looking upon him in this new—alas! to Marjorie's experienced mind, this too familiar—character of a philanderer, she could imagine him, married though he was, exhibiting that bit of ribbon among his companions as a trophy. "A gift, don't you know, bestowed on one by a fair hand that shall be nameless." Or he might show it among the idle fine ladies—oh, the hot shame at Marjorie's sleepy heart—the idle ladies in whose train he followed, while his wife, ignorant of Euclid or Greek, but not devoid of human nature, shed tears, not one single drop whereof the man was worthy, at home.

Marjorie Bartrand fell asleep in a state of the most pointed and virtuous indignation. Morning brought her back, as it brings back all of us, not to accidental emotion, but to the common habit of life. Her habit was to rise the moment her eyes unclosed, open her window, and gladly welcome the new day. She did so now. Standing in her white night-dress, the elastic air blowing on her face, she looked across a corner of the orchard to the spot where Geoffrey, the crescent moon shining, plucked the brier roses above

her reach. Away in the distant fields she saw the Reverend Andros, as he walked to and fro with firm slow step among his men. On her dressing-table lay an algebra paper, always her hardest work, which she intended resolutely to "floor" before her tutor's coming.

How sweet life was, thought the little girl, how full of fine things that no man's hand can take from us! Might it not be wisdom, even in a Mrs. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, as she had committed the error of marriage, to make the best of it—enjoy the sun that shone, the wind that blew, by day, and look upon sleep, not weeping, as the state for which nature designs our race at midnight!

After a swim in the bay, a brisk run up to the manoir, Marjorie, with hunger befitting her years, kept her grandfather in excellent countenance at his breakfast, a solid country meal at which broiled fish, ham and eggs from the farm-yard, home-made rolls and Guernsey buttered cake predominated. Then she went to the school-room, and long before a figure she watched for rose above the moor's horizon, had got the better of her paper.

Her wits were at their brightest this morning. Geoffrey Arbuthnot, for the first time since they had known each other, threw out a few crumbs of praise when the reading closed. Crumbs of plain household bread, be it understood—no sugar, no spice—but that caused Marjorie's heart to beat, the blood to leap swiftly into her mobile, all-confessing face.

Geff watched her with admiration he sought not to hide. They had been working under the cedars, as was their habit in these fair summer forenoons. A solitary beam of sunlight pierced the thick and odorous shade. It fell full on Marjorie, looking more like a child than usual in an unadorned cotton frock, and with her silky raven hair spread out to dry, unconfined by comb or ribbon, over her shoulders.

"The endowments of life certainly don't go to those who need them most." Geff gave utterance to the truism with the want of preface that was his habit. "Many a pale-faced, hard-working village school-mistress would have her path smoothened by possessing a tenth part of your brains. While for you—"

The words were leaving his lips in blunt fidelity. They were not well-considered words, perhaps. Which of us can stand on mental tiptoe every hour of the twenty-four? But they were about as innocent of premeditated flattery as was ever speech offered by man to civilized woman.

Marjorie interrupted him shortly; dormant indignation against

poor Geff as a frequenter of idle society, a midnight reveler, a careless husband, flaming forth on him, lightning-wise.

"For me, Marjorie Bartrand, living on rose leaves in Tintajoux Manoir—oh! I should be equally charming with brains or without them, should not I? Thank you immensely for the compliment, sir. If I could change places I would rather be the village school-mistress, plainly doing her day's work for her day's wages, than live idly on all the rose leaves, all the flatteries, the world could heap together." Then lifting her eyes, a look in them to pierce a guilty man's soul, "At what time should I be likely to find Mrs. Arbuthnot at home?" she asked him with cold directness. "I shall drive in to Miller's Hotel. I shall call on Mrs. Arbuthnot this afternoon."

A flush of undisguised pleasure went over Geoffrey's face. All these days he had hoped that some offer of the kind would come from Marjorie, not doubting that in this small island rumors of Dinah's beauty, perhaps of Dinah's troubles, must have reached as far as Tintajoux.

"I am afraid Mrs. Arbuthnot is to be found at home at most hours."

"So I am told."

"Dinah goes out too little in this fine June weather."

"Mrs. Arbuthnot must amend her ways. To-day is our Guernsey rose show. There will be military bands playing, dandies promenading," said Miss Bartrand witheringly, as she glanced at Geff's undandified figure, "fine ladies thinking and talking of everything under God's sun save the roses. Some of Mrs. Arbuthnot's friends will surely tempt her to join the gay crowd in the Arsenal?"

"Dinah has no friends. I mean, we have been too short a time in Guernsey to look for many callers. In the matter of visiting-cards, ladies, I am told, are prone to be sequacious."

So did Geff, with single-minded good-will, seek to round off the edges of Dinah Arbuthnot's isolation, of Gaston's neglect.

"And yet they say," cried Marjorie, her heart palpitating well-nigh to pain, "that Mrs. Arbuthnot's husband has acquaintance without stint."

"You must not believe half 'they' say, when men and women's domestic concerns are the theme of conversation. Mrs. Arbuthnot's husband chanced to meet accidentally with a Doctor and Mrs. Thorne here. The lady was a friend of former student days in Paris. It was the kind of meeting," added Geff apologetically,

"in which a man has no choice but to renew an acquaintance, and—"

"And Linda Thorne, of course, has called upon Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

The question came like a sword-thrust from Marjorie Bartrand.

"I—I am afraid—not yet," answered Geoffrey, with hesitation.

Gaston's careless conduct in regard of Dinah was just the one subject that could occasion straightforward Geoffrey's tongue to stammer.

"Ah! Linda Thorne has not called on Mrs. Arbuthnot. That lowers one's opinion," mused Marjorie, "not too high at any time, of Linda Thorne."

"When you meet Dinah you will see that she is a woman to care little for the common run of morning callers."

"I shall endeavor just the same to make her care for me."

Marjorie's tones were icy, a swell of curiously mixed feeling was in her breast.

"Endeavor will not be needed. I never made too sure," said Geff modestly, "that you would pay this visit. But I know that Dinah, in her heart, is more than prepared to bid you welcome."

He rose, visibly reluctant, from the cool green sward. Then with a sense that some subtle, intangible change had crept into his relations with his pupil, Geff prepared to take his leave.

But perilous stuff had yet to be dislodged from Marjorie Bartrand's conscience. She would not call upon the wife while that bit of Spanish ribbon, a loan made in a moment of foolish high spirits, remained unchallenged in the husband's possession.

"I hope you have taken care of something I lent you, sir. A piece of colored ribbon tied round those flowers I sent, the first evening grandpapa and I had the pleasure of knowing you, to Mrs. Arbuthnot."

"To Mrs. Arbuthnot. This is rough on a man," cried Geff. "Why, Miss Bartrand, you must have forgotten. Those flowers were given to me."

"Don't make too certain of that."

"But I am certain. I can see you as you stood in the strip of moonlight by the water-lane, wishing me good-night. Your last words were, 'the flowers are for yourself—your better self.'"

"The ribbon, at least, was given to no one," retorted Marjorie, changing color under his gaze. "It was lent to hinder you from breaking your neck. You meant to climb the Gros Nez cliffs if

you could. To do that a real good Guernsey man needs his hands, both of them, and I thought it a pity—”

“The real good Guernsey night should be disfigured by a stupid stranger leaving the world too tragically. I thank you heartily,” went on Geff, as the girl blushed deeper and deeper. “I measured the extent of your sympathy to an inch, at the time.”

A ring of absolute independence was in his voice; a suspicion lurked there, too, of hardly restrained laughter. For the situation was taking hold of him. Let us see, thought Geoffrey, in this feather-light matter of keeping or not keeping a morsel of sash ribbon, how far the small shrew could be tamed? Let us see which of the two should fitly, in the end, be styled conqueror?

So he thought, by no means forecasting that this feather-light matter of keeping a morsel of sash ribbon might be the pivot on which his life's fortunes should one day turn.

CHAPTER XL

“DODO'S DESPAIR.”

“My sympathy, I believe, was rightly bestowed,” said Marjorie frigidly. “I would not see the poorest wandering peddler start for the Gros Nez cliffs without helping him to the extent I helped you. Even a peddler might have a wife at home, sir. A foolish fond creature, shedding tears of anxiety for him in his absence.”

The side-thrust did not seem to scathe Geoffrey's conscience as it should have done.

“Would you make it a special point that this married peddler should return you your ribbon, Miss Bartrand?”

“I make it a point that Mr. Arbuthnot shall do so,” Marjorie delivered her ultimatum unflinchingly. “The ribbon is worthless except as a memento of some happy days I spent in Cadiz once, totally worthless to any living person but me.”

“And why should it not be a memento of happy days spent in Guernsey by myself?”

She looked him straight between the eyes, too hotly, dangerously irate to make immediate answer.

“Suppose, leading a prosaic life in the thick of bricks and mortar, that length of ribbon could act as a kind of talisman.”

“I don't understand you in the least.”

“A charm bringing back to one's tired eyes and heart the blue

summer night, the smell of moon-colored hayfields, the whole moment when it was given to me."

"I will suppose nothing of the sort. It was not given. This is vapid, sentimental talk," said Marjorie, concentrating her thoughts firmly on absent Dinah. "And I abhor sentiment."

"On that solitary point we agree."

"The ribbon I lent you to tie round Mrs. Arbuthnot's flowers is just a yard of woven, parti-colored silk. Buy the best match you can find to it, in the nearest mercer's shop. It will be as good a talisman."

"Are you a materialist, Miss Bartrand? Would you say that the ragged colors of one of the duke's regiments, the pennants of one of Nelson's ships, were so much woven silk, more or less stained and weather torn?"

"I do not see that my sash ribbon can or should be of the smallest interest to Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot," observed Marjorie, the blood leaping, more swiftly than it had done under his praise, to her cheek.

In this moment she was a woman, the childish cotton frock, the hair hung out to dry, the slim immature figure notwithstanding. A dawning of her sex's shame burned at her heart as she turned her looks away from him. In this moment, were it possible to assign place and date to matter so intangible, I should say that Geff Arbuthnot first, distinctly, began to fall in love.

"And suppose I feel that your sash can and ought to be of the greatest possible interest to me?" he urged.

Marjorie found no answer to her hand. If she had been reared under a different rule to Andros Bartrand's, if she had associated more with girls, had frequented afternoon-teas and garden-parties, she would, doubtless, even in innocent little Sarnia, have learned the formula by which a married man, hazarding idle speeches, ought mildly and effectually to be crushed.

Marjorie knew no more of flirtation or of its dialects than she did of Sanscrit. She had gone through an engagement, once, during a brief uncomfortable fortnight; an experience which took the taste for lovers and lovers' vows most adequately out of her young mouth. And now—oh, now she never meant to marry! She had her Greek and Latin in the present, a large outlook for herself and others in the future. Of flirtation she knew nothing, of engagements she knew too much! And she liked Geff Arbuthnot, and did not like the duties of repressing his frivolity, or of ranging her-

self against him in the civil wars of his home life. Yet to the utmost of her strength should both these duties be fulfilled.

"Your interests were appropriated long before you ever saw me," she replied at last. "What hour, this afternoon, would it be convenient, pray, for me to visit Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

Her tone, her look, might for a moment have suggested to Geoffrey that the secret of his youth had made unto itself wings and flown to Tintajoux. Only the very supposition were wild! Gaston, Dinah herself had never suspected the passionate madness which, in the May twilight of long ago, used to draw him night after night to the little thatched, rose-covered cottage at Lesser Cheriton.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot? For anything I know to the contrary, Dinah will be at home between three and four o'clock."

"And at our next reading, sir, you will bring back my ribbon."

"I made no promise."

"Of what mortal use can a bit of ribbon be to you, Mr. Arbuthnot?"

"I have had thoughts of turning this particular ribbon into a book-marker," said Geff, boldly imaginative.

"A book-marker! I ask you—do you think it honest to keep property that belongs to other people?"

"My conscience, I must confess, does not prick me."

"If I order will you obey?"

Marjorie had turned abruptly pale. Her mouth quivered.

"If you order I submit," said Geff, watching her gravely. "I will never go against your smallest wish, while I live. You shall have your ribbon before our next lesson, Miss Bartrand, I promise."

The shadow of a quarrel was between them when they bade good-bye. And at the thought of this shadow Marjorie's illogical spirit was sore vexed. But I think Geff Arbuthnot walked back to town with a lighter spirit in his breast than had reigned there since the moment when he first saw Dinah and Gaston as lovers, hand clasping hand, in the little Cambridgeshire orchard.

His knowledge of young girls, their instability, their hot and cold fits, their tempers, their fluctuating emotions, had been derived from books. So his theories on the subject were mainly worthless. But men who in after days rival neither Thackeray nor Balzac, do often, during one phase of their own experience, make keen enough guesses as to the source of female weakness. Geoffrey felt, with an instinct's force, that Marjorie Bartrand's blanched cheeks, her quivering lip, her passionate tones, were not the outcome of

childish anger. He felt, with an instinct's force, that the girl herself was a child no longer. Whither must this altered state of things tend?

The question was complex; and Geoffrey willingly let it rest. As he walked, the warm air was brier-scented, the birds murmured lazy midday nothings to each other amidst the lush hedges, the voice of Marjorie Bartrand filled his heart. What need to hope or fear for the future when one is twenty-four years old, and the actual living hour has a hold, delicious as this, upon the senses!

Dinah and her husband were alone together, a quiet little picture of domestic still life, when Geff reached the hotel.

A vine-trellised slip of court-yard lay outside the north window of Mrs. Arbuthnot's sitting-room. Here, during the sunny forenoon's, Gaston, picturesquely bloused, found it pleasant to work, when he was sufficiently in the vein to work at all. He wore his blouse, was in the vein now. That which two days ago was a mass of rough clay showed the airy outlines of a baby-girl, seated on a Brobdingnagian shell, one small foot neatly shod and socked, the other clasped, naked, between her dimpled hands, in an attitude of inimitable, three-year-old dismay.

"We label this work of genius 'The Lost Shoe,' or 'Dodo's Despair,' or some equally pathetic and unhackneyed title," remarked the sculptor, as Geff entered upon the scene. "We get our so many guineas for it, from our masters, and solicit further orders, do we not, Dinah?"

"You should have no master but your art," was Dinah's answer.

"That is easily said. My wife, as usual, Geff, is urging upon me to fulfill my mission, to deliver messages, to begin big and serious work. But I fancy I gauge my own depths justly. I have no messages whatever to deliver to anybody. These trickeries of Philistine sentiment," Gaston pointed with a shapely clay stained hand to his model, "are always a success. In the first place, they draw tears from Mr. and Mrs. Prudhomme. In the second, the dealers approve them. What more can an artist's heart desire?"

"Everything," replied Dinah.

But she spoke in parenthesis, and under her breath.

"Am I anatomical, Geoffrey? This must always be important, whether a man work with or without a mission. How about this bend in the left knee-joint? Are my muscles right?"

Geoffrey offered one or two strictly professional criticisms; then

after admiring the grace, the charm of the little clay sketch, gave his uncompromising moral support to Dinah.

Whoever possesses genius—well, talent, no need to fight over words—lies under the behest of duty. Gaston's duty, the one straight and unmistakable road that lay before him, was to abandon conventional prettiness, to go in for the expression of the highest thoughts that were in him.

"I am destitute of high thoughts," said Gaston, his refined, intellectual face belying the assertion. "I have not the prophet's rôle. If I tried to soar I should immediately afterward have to climb down. I have no original ideas to embody—"

"Gaston!" broke, with an accent of denial, from Dinah's lips.

"And the dealers, Farrago in Pall Mall especially, are my masters. Before I left town Farrago's advice was memorable. 'The market demands nothing classic in statuettes, Mr. Arbuthnot. Nothing romantic. Above all, nothing to make us think. The market demands trifles, sir, trifles. Objects for the smoke-room or boudoir. Domestic amenities, as you agreeably say, for Monsieur and Madame Prudhomme. And, for wider sections of society, 'flavor.' In any case, trifles. Nothing, if you please, to make us think.'"

"Instead of obeying," exclaimed Dinah, "you ought to say, 'I, Gaston Arbuthnot, must do such and such work, no other. Let Mr. Farrago take my statuettes or leave them, as he likes.'"

"That style of talk is for giants, my dear child—putting aside the fact that I am bound to Farrago for another six months. Carlyle talked so to the Edinburgh Reviewers. Viewed by the light of after success his talk may sound grand. If Carlyle had not speedily written the 'French Revolution' it would have been called 'tall.'"

"But I want you to write your 'French Revolution' in clay," Dinah persisted. "Here, in Guernsey, you know, you planned to make studies, always studies, for the great work you will set about in Florence. But then," a piece of embroidery was between Dinah's hands; she lifted her eyes from her wools and silks at this juncture, and fixed them, full of earnest reproach, on Gaston, "there have been unfortunate throw-backs."

"Throw-backs! As how?" Gaston Arbuthnot applied himself to the correction of one of the points anatomically criticised by Geoffrey. "As long as I am bound to Farrago, even feminine morality, my love, will allow that I should be honest. Every saleable thing I do must pass, as per contract, through Farrago's hands.

"Taking one day with another, I have got through rather more work than the average, here in Guernsey."

"Have you put your own thoughts into form, Gaston? This model, when it is finished"—she glanced somewhat coldly at "Dodo's Despair"—"will be a portrait of Rahnee Thorne, simply."

"Rahnee Thorne, idealized!" Gaston's rejoinder was made with the unruffled temper that characterized him. "My clay infant has flesh up n her bones, and an infant's face. Rahnee, though I love the child, is but a poor little wizened Bengalee, at her best."

"Will the portrait of Rahnee's mamma, the model you have on hand at The Bungalow, need to be idealized also?"

"Dinah, you should be magnanimous." And with a movement that in a less composed man might have been a shrug of the shoulders, Mr. Arbuthnot prepared to clean the clay from his hands. "A pretty woman—well, if you shake your head, an exceedingly beautiful woman need never utter a sarcasm about a plain one."

At the negative compliment a color, soft as the pure pink veining of a shell cameo, stained Dinah's face. Her breast throbbed. And all the time the speech, delicious in sound, signified nothing. Gaston had been engaged for days past to escort plain Mrs. Linda to the rose-show, and felt not the smallest temptation to break his engagement. Dinah must be magnanimous! Dinah's husband, after two or three hours' facile work on "Dodo's Despair," needed relaxation, and would have it.

"You ought to take me to the show, Geff," she pleaded, turning round half jestingly, half in earnest, to Geoffrey. "What would Linda Thorne, what would Gaston think, if I suddenly made my appearance among all the fine ladies of Guernsey?"

"Linda Thorne might have her own views," said Gaston. "When Dinah Arbuthnot shows her face, every fine lady, in Guernsey or elsewhere, must be on the spot eclipsed."

Whatever Dinah thought, Geff knew that a certain insincerity underlay the speech, and controlled a pungent remark with effort. The friendship of the Arbuthnot trio was never more sharply paradoxical than at this moment.

CHAPTER XII.

YELLOW-BACKED NOVELS.

THE June rose-show stands second only to her Majesty's birthday among the big events of the Channel Islands' calendar.

By three o'clock the road between Petersport and the Arsenal

plateau was filled with a growing stream of men and women. Simple rose lovers many of them, but some lovers of another kind. And some roses themselves! What buoyant young figures fluttered past the window whence Dinah Arbuthnot, shrouded from view, undreaming of her own future, watched the crowd! What ruddy fine complexions were here, what well-shapen noses and mouths, what dark Norman eyes! Why, you might scour half a dozen English counties before you could bring together as many handsome girls as would soon be within the Guernsey Arsenal's four walls. Must not excuse be made—the thought was Dinah's—for an artist who should long to stock his brain's tablets with so much beauty, even though an idle tear or two, a little discontent in some one left at home, must be the price of his experience?

She strove her best to be magnanimous, to give a valiant "yes" to this self-propounded question. Then even as she made the effort, a group of persons drew nigh from the direction of Petersport, at the sight of whom, poor Dinah's magnanimity and the wifely heart that beat in her breast stood instantly at variance. Her hands turned cold and rigid. A prophecy, rather than an actual living look of jealous anger, swept all the youthful gentleness from her face.

A group of four persons: Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, Mrs. Thorne, the small daughter, Rahnee, and a native nurse. Dazzling was Mrs. Linda in whatever furbelows and head gear local Parisian milliners had impressed on the feminine Sarnian mind as the "last thing out." Overdecked in embroidery and ribbons was Rahnee, a sorrowfully thin little child, with dark-ringed eyes, sallow cheeks, bangles on wrist. A typical Indian child, perverse, sickly, unruled, and who at the present moment was dancing, knowingly and deliberately, on her mother's fragile flounces at every second step.

"I am sure one ought to reform her." Thus Linda would make confession among her matron friends. "But what is to be done as long as you keep an ayah? You must reform the ayah first. That is just the one enthusiasm of humanity which is outside my reach, to reform an ayah."

Rahnee, I repeat, danced persistently and with effect on her mother's cobweb furbelows, as she capered and twisted herself along the street. Linda's expression was as little honeyed as the expression of a coquette can ever be in the presence of a man she seeks to charm. The ayah vainly gesticulated, vainly uttered expostulations in unknown Eastern tongues from the rear. Break-down and rout of one or other of the forces seemed imminent. Sud-

denly, just as they were passing the hotel—perhaps it was this incident stabbed Dinah's unreasoning heart to the quick—Gaston came to the fore as mediator. Holding out both hands, Gaston Arbuthnot offered small Rahnee a place on his shoulder. Dinah could hear his pleasant voice, indicative of a mind of content with its surroundings, as he began some sage nursery talk, all-engrossing, it would seem, to Rahnee's soul. The thin arms closed round his neck, the tiny primrose-gloved fingers played with his hair. Mrs. Linda, a restored picture of amiable maternity, trotted behind. The ayah followed after; her black orbs pantomiming unspeakable things to such portions of the Guernsey world as had been chance witnesses of the scene. Then domestic-wise, the group of four persons went their way.

A choking, hysterical lump rose in Dinah's throat. With a vague sense of her own worthiness, a suspicion that if Dinah Arbuthnot was out of keeping with sunshine and flowers and little children, Dinah Arbuthnot herself must be to blame, she watched Gaston and his friends until they had turned the corner toward the Arsenal. Barely was the final shimmer of Linda's flounce lost to view, when a clatter of hoofs approached rapidly along the Petersport road. A miniature phaeton with a girl driver, and drawn by a pair of small black ponies, came in sight. A minute later, and Marjorie Bartrand, who had drawn up before the portico of the hotel, was inquiring—yes, there could be no mistake; through the open windows the sound of her own name reached Dinah distinctly, "If Mrs. Arbuthnot was at home?"

Dinah had not received one morning visitor in Guernsey. How many morning visitors (upon Mrs., not Mr. Arbuthnot) had Dinah received since her marriage? The unexpected respectability of the event—for our Tintajoux Bartrands, mind you, with all her eccentricity, stand on the topmost rung of the social insular ladder—moved Mr. Miller's mind. A man of tact and discrimination, the host proceeded himself to usher Marjorie in.

The Arbuthnots' parlor door was thrown open with an air. "Miss Bartrand of Tintajoux" was announced in Miller's most professional voice. Then came the meeting to which Marjorie had looked forward with resolute conscience, perhaps with lurking doubts as to the cordiality of the reception that should await her.

"This is very good of you." Dinah spoke in her usual voice. She came forward with the simplicity that draws so near to De Vere repose. "Gecfrey never warned me I was to look for such a pleasure. I take it very kind of you to come, Miss Bartrand."

Dinah's trouble had just reached that level when the smallest act of good will, from friend or stranger, may cause the cup to overflow. Her eyes suffused, her color heightened.

"Mr. Arbuthnot thought I should be likely to find you at home this afternoon. I wanted to see you long ago!" cried Marjorie, her gaze fixed on the face whose delicate beauty so far overpassed her expectations. "But I waited—I thought," stammered the girl, for the first time since she could remember feeling an excuse needed for her conduct—"I thought, of course, Mr. Arbuthnot might ask me to call."

"Who—Geff?" answered Dinah, with a fltering, shy smile. "No, indeed, Miss Bartrand. Geoffrey would not make so bold. He knows too well that I live retired."

Dinah's phrases were certainly not those of the educated world. But Marjorie, looking open-eyed at the mouth and throat and golden hair, was in no mood to be critical.

"I have lived retired, pretty well from the time I married. My husband does whatever visiting is required of us."

"That is unfair to the world at large!" cried Marjorie Bartrand, drawing up a chair to the table, where wools and silks lay heaped beside Dinah's patiently progressing canvas. "Whatever hermit rules you observe elsewhere we shall make you break through them in Guernsey. I may look at your work? What intricate shading!" She scanned the pathetic mass of Dinah's stitches. "What a labor of love embroidery must be to you!"

"It helps pass the time," said Dinah Arbuthnot. "Wool-work fills up long hours that must else be empty. For I am not a scholar like you, Miss Bartrand, or like Geoffrey. And I only learned the piano for two years at boarding-school, not enough to play well."

"Still, you do play?"

Marjorie glanced across at a piano that stood open. A goodly heap of music scores lay on a neighboring ottoman.

"Not in such a public place as an hotel. The notes you see there are my husband's. Mr. Arbuthnot sings, as I dare say you know. He was thought, once on a time, to have the best tenor voice in Cambridge. Some day," said Dinah dubitantly, "I may play just well enough to accompany him. Unfortunately for me, the most beautiful of his songs are in French."

Marjorie bethought her of Geoffrey's accent, and was silent.

"You will have good opportunities of learning French in Guernsey, Mrs. Arbuthnot."

"Geff wants me to take lessons. We have a French waitress

here in the hotel, but she speaks too quick for me, so do my husband and—and Mrs. Thorne. I only understand the sort of French we learned at boarding-school—the sort of French the girls talked together,” said poor Dinah modestly.

No books, no languages, no music: only cross-stitch, the counting of canvas threads, to fill one's existence and one's heart. And for life companion, thought Marjorie, a husband who frequented afternoon teas, who warbled “beautiful” French ditties, in a bad accent, to audiences of women on the level of Linda Thorne!

This vision of Geoffrey, as a singer, added the crowning touch to the girl's disappointment in his character. Throughout the brief, bitter-tasting epoch when her unwilling hand wore an engagement-ring, she was accustomed to hear French sentiment in an English accent, and an English tenor voice, during at least three hours out of each twenty-four. At this moment the tinkling burden of one frequent song came back, with a sense of repulsion that was pain, upon her heart.

“Si vous n'avez rien à me dire
Pourquoi passez-vous par ici?”

She remembered how the white hands of Major Tredennis used to rattle out the accompaniment of that song. She remembered the flower Major Tredennis wore at his button-hole, the last day he visited Tintajeux—remembered, when she got knowledge of his treachery, how instant and far-reaching was her scorn.

With what honesty did she now scorn all human creatures of the Tredennis stamp. How loyally would she put herself forward as Dinah's friend; yes, although she must forfeit the reading of mathematics and classics with Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot as her reward!

“You have not been here long enough to see much of the island. Of course you are fond of the country?”

“Well, I was country born and bred. Real country folk, my husband says, set less store upon green fields and hedgerows than the town people.”

“But you like being out of doors? You will walk or drive with me sometimes? I have a pair of Welsh ponies, capital at scrambling up and down our Guernsey lanes.”

“You are very kind, Miss Bartraud, but I can't quite give an answer. You see I should have to speak to Mr. Arbuthnot.”

Poor Dinah colored with actual shame at the proposal.

“Now, to-day. Why are you not enjoying yourself with the

rest of the world at the show? Guernsey roses, I can tell you, are worth looking at."

"I asked Geff, in joke, of course, to take me," Dinah answered. "But he was not polite enough to say 'Yes.'"

"Will you come with me?" cried Marjorie. "As I drove in from Tintajoux, I was getting my courage up all the way to ask you this. I have no chaperon, and now that I am seventeen, nearly a grown-up woman, the old ladies tell my grandfather it is improper I should go about without one. I, who know the island like a cat! You would be doing an act of charity by coming with me to the Arsenal."

Dinah's face grew irresolute at this plea of special pleading. She crossed to the window, and looked with wistful eyes up the street. She recalled the group which had passed along, a quarter of an hour before. She heard Gaston's voice again, saw the tiny primrose hands clasped round his throat. She thought of Linda Thorne's rainbow-colored flounces, and of Linda Thorne herself.

"I should like to go." The truth broke from her after a minute more of hesitation. "I was feeling duller than usual when you came, Miss Bartrand, and I do like a flower show above all things. We used to go to the Tiverton shows when my sister and I were girls. Uncle William, who lived bailiff at Lord Lufton's, would take us when the gentlepeople were gone. But that," Dinah interrupted herself hastily, "was different. We were with Uncle William, we were in our place. I should not be in my place with you. Perhaps you are too young, Miss Bartrand, to see this. My husband is at the Arsenal with his friends, and—"

"Wherever a husband goes is a place for his wife, according to my ideas of matrimony," said Marjorie, in a careless tone, but with her veracious face aflame. "I will not hear another excuse. It will be a curiously pleasant surprise for Mr. Arbuthnot when he sees you in my society."

"The ladies are dressed so elegantly," objected Dinah, at the same time moving toward the door. "And I never wear smart things."

"Neither do I." In truth, Marjorie wore one of the plain washed frocks, the sunburnt straw hat, that she wore on the moor at Tintajoux. "What do smart things or smart people matter to you and me? Dress as you choose, Mrs. Arbuthnot. You will look better than every woman in the Arsenal."

"I had best put on black. My husband, fortunately, has lovely taste, even in ladies' dress. He tells me black is always the safest



thing for me to wear." ("Black cachemire and silence." Dinah remembered those were the requisites Gaston advocated, obliquely—the hint concealed by charming flowers of speech—on the solitary occasion when he introduced her to some female members of his family in London.) "I shall ask you to tell me, Miss Bartrand, about my gloves and ribbons."

Thus speaking, Dinah passed away through a side door, into her own chamber. For Gaston, with his knack of organizing daily life after the manner that best suited himself, had taken a compact little suite of apartments on Mr. Miller's ground floor. And Marjorie, left to her meditations, glanced around the parlor—in writing of Guernsey, and of Dinah, the old-fashioned word must be excused—for landmarks that should point out its present possessors' tastes.

Dinah was not a woman whose affections tended toward ornament, in art, or in dress. Had they done so, Dinah's life had probably been happier. Her work-basket, with its outlying heaps of silk and wool, was the only sign Marjorie could detect of feminine occupation. What of Dinah's husband? Pipes and cigarette-holders of varying patterns were ranged on either side the mantel-piece. A tobacco jar stood in unabashed evidence on a table. An odor not to be mistaken clung round the draperies of the windows. So this man smoked, thought Marjorie irefully—*smoked* in his beautiful, refined wife's living-room! Yellow-backed French novels abounded (French novels I must confess were an abiding inspiration of Gaston's genius). The neighborhood of the piano was strewn with French songs. A volume of Greek poetry, lent to Geoffrey by old Andros Bartrand, lay on a bookshelf. In a corner by the door Marjorie discerned a rough brier walking stick which she recognized as her tutor's property.

As she looked around the room her impulse was to burst into tears. It was but an inn's best parlor. You could not expect the perfume, the grace of Tintajoux under good Mr. Miller's roof. But it was not Louis Seize furniture, or Pompadour cabinets, or Trianon rose-baskets, that Marjorie missed. To pipes and tobacco smoke her life with the seigneur had accustomed her. Yellow-backed novels did not disturb her conscience. Within limits she could endure French songs. The room repulsed her because it destroyed every dream she had had of Geoffrey! Without the Greek volume, she thought, without the brier stick, even, her disenchantment had been less vivid. She had not been forced to remember him, to admit the lapse into bathos of her own ridiculously high-plighted ideal.

But so the facts stood. "One may be made a fool twice," the girl told herself. "First by a sweetheart, secondly by a friend. Happily Dinah Arbuthnot, not Marjorie Bartrand, must this time pay the reckoning."

And the tears were in her eyes still. In spite of all disillusionment, her liking for Geff lingered obstinately. She thought she could never again be glad of heart as on that midsummer night when she courtesied to the moon and wished a wish by her tutor's side on the lawn at Tintajoux.

It took Dinah Arbuthnot fifteen minutes—a real "quarter of an hour of Rabelais" for Marjorie—to put on hat and gown; fifteen minutes ere she could be sure her appearance would pass muster in the eyes of Linda Thorne. The best and simplest women infrequently dress for the other sex, or for the world at large, or for themselves. They dress for each other, oftenest of all for one especial feminine criticism which they have reason to fear.

"Shall I do, Miss Bartrand?" Dinah peeped, her exquisite face aflush, through the half-opened door, then she crossed the room to Marjorie; instinct, true as a child's, informing her that in Geoffrey's pupil she had found a friend. "I want you to pick me to pieces, find as much fault with me as you can. Shall I do?"

"Do!" repeated Marjorie.

And a volume of hearty admiration was in the monosyllable.

Dinah Thurston, in her girlhood, had learned dress-making as a trade. Of dress as a difficult social art, Dinah Arbuthnot knew not the initial letters. Here, her husband was an unfailing monitor. Gaston had an artist's knowledge of color and effect. He had the sense of fitness belonging to a man of the world. Dinah's apparel might not accurately follow the fashion books. It bore the seal of distinction at all times.

Thus, the "safe" black dress was absolutely perfect of its kind; plain of make as was meet for such a bust, such shoulders as Dinah's, but draped by a Parisian hand that knew its cunning. A ruffle of Mechlin lace enhanced the sweet whiteness of the wearer's throat. A velvet lined hat threw up the outline of the head, the waves of short-cut English-colored hair, in rich relief.

"You are lovelier than any picture!" cried Marjorie, looking at Dinah Arbuthnot with as generous a pleasure, surely, as ever woman felt in the good looks of another.

"Advise me about my gloves." Dinah blushed and drew back at the girl's frank praise. "Here are cream-colored ones, you see, the same shade as my ruffle, and here is a box of long black silk



gloves. My husband had them sent from Paris with the gown. Of course, the cream-colored are the dressiest." The tone of Dinah's voice betrayed her own leaning. "Mr. Arbuthnot warns me generally against light gloves. My hands, he says, are half a size too large. Still for a flower show—"

"You must wear the black gloves, Mrs. Arbuthnot. No shadow of doubt about it! As you see, I don't go in for dandy dress myself," said Marjorie, "but one can't help hearing the whispers of the milliners. These long silk gloves are at present the one righteous thing to wear, in London and in Paris."

"And no ribbons; no ornament? I have a gold necklace that looks nice on black, and—"

"You want no ornament at all. You must take our little world by storm just as you stand at this moment. Miller has some crimson roses in his garden. We will cut one as we pass. The black of your hat would be better for a single spot of color."

By the time Marjorie's fiery Welsh ponies had rushed up to the Arsenal, four o'clock was striking. The rose-show festivities were, for the weak and frivolous, at their culminating point. It was the hour when staid flower-lovers—sensible souls who came to see the real, not the human roses—were leaving, Cassandra Tighe among them.

"I am starting off to Tintajoux," she told Marjorie, as they passed each other at the entrance. "The seigneur's 'Duc de Rohan' has taken a prize, and I must be first to carry the news to the manoir." Then, with a kindly glance at Dinah, "You have done the right thing, have paid your visit," she whispered. "I don't see the necessity of mixing yourself up with it all in public. Linda Thorne presides at the refreshment tent, and that wretched man is simply infatuated in his attentions. But the error is generous. Being a Bertrand, you can, I suppose, do nothing by halves."

"I consider myself honored by appearing with Mrs. Arbuthnot," returned Marjorie, very low. "I want to judge of that wretched man's conduct at first hand, see facts alive, and extract their meaning by the light of my own common sense."

CHAPTER XIII.

THROUGH SMOKE-COLORED SPECTACLES.

THE refreshment tent was pitched at the most conspicuous point of the Arsenal, just within the gates. Here Linda Thorne, assisted by three or four white-muslined aides-de-camp, dispensed strawber-

ries, ices, and tea, liberal of smiles, but most illiberal in charges to the crowd.

Gaston Arbuthnot hovered near, not engaging Mrs. Thorne's attention, but with the air of a man whose freedom is nominal—of a prisoner on parole. The ayah had vanished. Small Rahnee, in a corner, was busily laying up a week's trouble for her tropical digestion over a plate of stolen macaroons. A swarm of well-gloved, well-set-up young gentlemen, subalterns, for the most part, of the Maltshire Royals, newly returned from Africa, clustered ornamentally around.

"Lord Rex," cried Linda, in a playful voice appealing to a youth who stood behind her chair, a plain but ultra-dandified youth, with a sun-scorched face, sandy hair and eyelashes, and who wore his left arm in a sling. "My dear Lord Rex, where are your thoughts to-day? For the third and last time of asking, will you run across to Madame the Archdeaconess, and press her to drink a second cup of tea?"

For Linda, a clever politician, never allowed the present to divert her mindfulness from the future. Belonging—*sub silentio*—to the extreme left of any society in which she found herself, Mrs. Thorne kept a firm grip, here in European coteries, as formerly in Indian stations, on whatever Conservative mainstay might be within her reach. Her Guernsey mainstay was the archdeacon's wife. Linda was a member, under Madame Corbie, of cutting-out clubs, district-visiting corps, societies for persuading members of all denominations to change places with each other, and similar intricate philanthropies of the hour and place. If, occasionally, serious circles looked with misgiving upon some little new escapade, some unaccustomed outbreak of vivacity at the Bungalow, Linda's usefulness floated her. There was such a fund of sterling worth in Linda Thorne! So some old lady would say at whose house Linda perhaps, on the preceding evening, demure as a mouse, had been painting Christmas cards for the Caribbee Islanders. Such energy, such zeal for the weaker brethren! Such a genius for collecting subscriptions, or organizing fancy bazaars! And then one must not forget the stock she came of. One must always remember what our dear flighty Linda's grandpapa *was*!

Hence, perhaps, the leniency of the judgments. The old Sarnian ladies never forgot that our dear flighty Linda's grandpapa was an earl.

"Madame Corbie—tea!" echoed Lord Rex Basire, the sun-scorched dandy, absently. "Ah, there she goes again. The pret-

tiest girl, ycs, by Jove! the out-and-ourest girl, every way, I have seen in Guernsey. Golden hair, a complexion, a figure— Let me take the Venerable her cheering cup at once, and set me free to fly after my Dulcinea."

"A new Dulcinea?" asked Linda, with a glance as sweet as the cup she had prepared for Madame Corbie. "I thought Lord Rex Basire had flown after every Dulcinea in the Channel Islands, a long time since."

Lord Rex broke away without reply, causing a good deal of the Venerable's tea to overflow by reason of his impetuous movements. But he was not set free again as quickly as he desired.

Madame Corbie was what the Scottish ballie called "a fine respectit half-worn sort of woman." Her set of immediate worshippers, poorer cousins for the most part, would speak of her beneath their breath as so superior! Madame Corbie never smiled. Madame Corbie never retracted a step once taken. It was her harmless boast that she had never read a novel in her life—as one would say he had never cut a throat, or picked a pocket. She would wear no black satin that cost less than ten shillings and sixpence (Guernsey currency) per yard. And she surveyed the moral, as she did the physical, world through a pair of smoke-colored spectacles.

Even the archdeacons, however, had her little stock of human vanities and foibles. Persons of title, though they exist in adequate number on the British mainland, are scarce and prized, like the pink flowering hydrangea, on these smaller islets. With the rectors' wives from half a dozen country parishes, sitting around, neglected, it was a distinctly soothing sensation for good Madame Corbie's unworldly heart to have Lord Rex Basire, the fifth son of a very impoverished duke, in attendance upon her.

"A second cup of tea? Why, Lord Rex and dear Linda were certainly conspiring to spoil us all! And might she, the arch-deaconess, ask if there was such a thing to be had as a macaroon?"

"Too late, Madame Corbie! Lost your chance," cried Lord Rex. "That young limb, Rahpee, has been beforehand with you. I say her devouring the last three macaroons at a gulp just as Linda sent me off with your tea."

Lord Rex was forced to shout these words into Madame Corbie's ear, for the band of the Maltshire Royals were playing a forcible, much kettle-drummed polka, not twenty feet distant, so his attentions, even to the obtuse perceptions of country rectors' wives, must be unmistakably marked.

"Sadly unwholesome diet, to be sure. But poor Linda Thorne

is so indiscreet in minor matters. You agree with me, do you not, Lord Rex? Nothing more sadly indigestible for a young child's stomach than macaroons?"

Lord Rex Basine heard her not. It may be doubted whether Lord Rex heard the horns and kettle-drums as they echoed resonantly from the Arsenal walls. He was absorbed in the vision of a distant lovely head, poised flower-like on a white throat, its waves of amber hair set off against the soft velvet of a Rubens hat. No other interest existed on our planet at that moment for Lord Rex Basine.

He was a man who from his birth upward had followed the desire of the hour, for evil or for good; mainly, not for good. His desire now was to become acquainted with the exquisitely pretty girl whom his eyes pursued. Bluntly abandoning the question (from a physiological side) of macaroons, he addressed himself to the archdeaconess. Did Madame Corbie—the polka by now had stopped, Lord Rex could ask his question without a shout—did Madame Corbie know the name of the girl who was walking with Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajeux? "Golden-haired girl—straight features, the loveliest complexion in the world," added Lord Rex, with the frankness of a momentarily real feeling.

"It will be my husband's cousin once removed, Ella Corbie of La Haute-rive," observed Madame Corbie, blandly. "The Haute-rive yellow roses are fine this year. I have not a word to say against their 'Celine Forestier.' But in my poor opinion the archdeacon's 'Maréchal Niel' ought to have taken the prize. Yes, yes"—Madame Corbie gazed through her smudged spectacles into the perspective of history—"Ella Corbie is still nice-looking. I remember her, dressed for her first evening party more than a dozen years ago, and now—"

"My dear Madame Corbie! I beg a thousand pardons, your cup is empty—allow me to set it down," interrupted Lord Rex Basine.

For at this precise moment the perfect features, the lovely complexion, were again setting toward him in the crowd.

But Madame Corbie, the head of our local society, rose to the occasion, and to her feet.

"Let me have a good look, Lord Rex, and if it is my cousin Ella I will introduce you to her. A young lady walking, you say, with Major Bartrand? That is certainly most unlike Ella! The Haute-rive family keep so exclusively to themselves. Still—"

"There they are—coming this way, by Jove!" cried Lord Rex,

breathlessly. "You see the girl I mean? Splendid girl in black—lace ruffle—a red rose lying on her hair?"

Madame Corbie looked through her smoke-colored glasses straight. Then she looked through her smoke-colored glasses obliquely edgewise. Then she pushed them high away on her ample forehead, and gazed stoically upward in the broad light of the merry June day.

"The person," she pronounced, with awful solemnity, "who is walking with Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux *does not belong to this island.*"

And so speaking, and with the folds of her satin doing credit to the price paid for them, Madame Corbie there, in full presence of the inferior clergy's wives, sat down.

"Ah! I thought not. Thought I had never seen such a pretty woman in the place," observed Lord Rex, addressing his own consciousness, rather than the ill-pleased ears of the archdeaconess. "What are the odds I don't get properly introduced and properly snubbed before another quarter of an hour is over?"

As a preliminary step, Lord Rex rushed back to the refreshment tent, Madame Corbie's tea-cup his ostensible excuse. He threw himself on Linda Thorne's ambiguous sympathy.

"Mrs. Thorne, you know all about every one by fine natural discernment. I've heard you say so a hundred times. Who is this wonderful girl in black that Marjorie Bartrand is walking about with?"

A suppressed smile lurked round Linda Thorne's thin lips.

"Let us give Mr. Arbuthnot the task of learning her pedigree. It is an act of charity, always, to find work for idle men. Mr. Arbuthnot," she turned to Gaston, "I want you to find out something for the peace of Lord Rex Basire's mind and of my own existence. Who is this wonderful girl in black who is walking about the Arsenal grounds with Marjorie Bartrand?"

"If I were of a brave disposition I would go myself," said Lord Rex, when Gaston had sauntered placidly off on his mission. "But I am not. I am a coward, down to the ground. Peace at any price is my motto, politically and otherwise. To-day I am feeling more than usually nervous—not half 'go' enough in me to stand up under one of Marjorie Bartrand's snubbings."

"I can not say your modesty makes itself known to the world by outward and visible signs."

"Modesty—no! I understand you, madam. A man may have forward manners but a faint heart."

Lord Rex Basire's arm, in justice let it be spoken, got a bullet through it in hot warfare. This dandified boy was in the thick of more than one African fight when clouds gathered dark above the English colors, was all but drowned on a never-to-be-forgotten night while attempting to carry succor to the wounded, left with their solitary gallant surgeon, on an abandoned position.

"I tried once, at a militia review or something, to talk to Marjorie, just in the usual way one talks, not without success you know, to girls of her age."

"And the result was?" asked Linda.

"She looked at me coolly—grand Spanish eyes of hers those are, but the temper in them! 'You are fresh from Eton, are you not?' she observed. I confessed that Eton had known me in my youth. 'Talk about Eton, then,' struck out Miss Bartrand, straight from the shoulder. 'Talk about cricket, football, boating, Latin grammar, if you learned any. I will not,' with a murderous flash from her big eyes, 'listen to foolishness from any man.'"

By the time Lord Rex finished this characteristic anecdote, Gaston Arbuthnot, with his usual expression of genial impenetrability, had sauntered back to the refreshment tent. Picking up Rahnee, he asked the child what ailed her? For Rahnee's face, sickly at all times, wore a look and hue forlornly out of keeping with the bravery of her attire.

"What in the world has befallen the infant, Mrs. Thorne? Her complexion is of the lively arsenic green the doctors forbid us to use in wall papers."

"Rahnee! mamma's own darling pet, what is the matter?" cried Linda, suddenly recalled to the fact of her darling's existence.

"Me eat matazoons. Bad matazoons!" whimpered Rahnee, with the tender conscience, the quick physical repentance of her age.

"That is a wise little Rahnee," said Gaston Arbuthnot, kissing her. "Right morality. Pitch into our pleasures the moment our pleasures begin to pitch into us."

"Have you seen her?" exclaimed Lord Rex. "This kind of trifling, remember, may be fun to all of you. It's stretched high above a joke to me. A tall, fair girl, dressed in black—"

"With a crimson rose in her hair," added Linda, "and walking with Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux."

"Well, yes," Gaston admitted in the lapses of whispered consolation to poor Rahnee, "I have seen her."

"And who is she?" exclaimed Linda Thorne. "I am almost as

curious as Lord Rex. Have you discovered this new Dulcinea's name?"

"Her name is Dinah Arbuthnot," replied Gaston cheerfully. "Yes, Mrs. Thorne, incredulous though I know you feel, the wonderful girl in black, and who is walking with Miss Bartrand of Tintajoux, is—my wife."

Lord Rex sunk in an attitude of despair, half mock, half genuine, upon the nearest bench.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROUGHT UP BY THE JESUITS.

DINAH ARBUTHNOT had been more than woman could she have run the gantlet of this Guernsey rose-show unconscious of her success.

But admiration to Dinah was no new thing. As a girl she never went through that chrysalis or ugly duckling stage, the remembrance of which to many women puts an edge on after triumphs. Heads were turning after her to-day, she saw, just as heads used to turn when she was a baby, toddling along the Devonshire lanes, or a slim maid walking in the procession of "young ladies" from Tiverton boarding-school. She had known since she knew anything that she was beautiful, and rated beauty at a pathetically low standard.

Thanks to roseleaf tint or well-cut features, a sweetheart's fancy can easily be won. Who should say that cleverness, knowledge of the world, tact, are not the solid gifts that bring happiness, the qualities that might chain a husband—wearied, say, after modeling from hired beauty—to his own fireside?

"If you do not object, Miss Bartrand, I would like to find some place where we could rest away from the crowd a little." Bent upon displaying their friendship before the Sarnian world, Marjorie had by this time paraded her companion bravely throughout the length and breadth of the Arsenal. "My husband has seen me. He is in the tent near the entrance, the tent where Mrs. Thorne is serving refreshments. As Mr. Arbuthnot does not come forward to meet us, I am afraid he is displeased."

"Displeased? That is a great idea," cried headstrong Marjorie. "Put all the blame on me. I think I shall be strong enough to bear the brunt of Mr. Arbuthnot's wrath if I rest myself well, first."

They succeeded in finding a bench, withdrawn somewhat from

the crowd, yet within sight of the stall at which Linda presided. Here Dinah could pluck up her drooping courage, while Marjorie communed scornfully in her heart as to the pitiful weakness of married women in general, and of this most neglected, most mistaken married woman in particular. Their seclusion lasted for two or three minutes only. Then a blush started up into Dinah's cheek, vivid, bashful, such as a girl's face might wear on catching sight unexpectedly of her lover, for she saw Gaston approaching. At his side was a very dandily dressed, sun-tanned youth, his arm in a sling; a youth whom as yet Dinah Arbuthnot knew not.

"He is coming! Miss Bartrand, I look to you to smooth things over. Just say you pressed me to come to the show, and I refused at first, and—"

"I will say everything that can decently be compressed into one act of contrition." Marjorie's tone was fraught with ironical seriousness. "But your eyes are better than mine, Mrs. Arbuthnot. A guilty conscience perhaps sharpens the external senses. I am looking with the best of my seeing power over the whole Arsenal. I see no Mr. Arbuthnot."

"Then his companion must stand in the way, the light-haired gentleman with a plain-like reddish face," whispered Dinah, "and who wears his left arm in a sling."

"That is our popular hero, Lord Rex Basire, newly returned from South African fighting, and as proud of his gunshot wound as a foolish girl might be of her first conquest."

"Well, and there is my husband walking with him."

"Your husband! Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

Marjorie's world was reeling. A possibility—she knew not of what—a wild and passionate hope trembled on the outside edge of her thoughts.

"Perhaps I am not a fair judge," murmured Dinah, the two young men having been arrested on their road by that incorrigible button-seizer, Dr. Thorne, "but, to my mind, Gaston must always be the most noticeable man in any company he enters, no matter how high that company may be."

"Gaston?"

Marjorie Bartrand was in a state of such bewilderment that the echoing of Dinah Arbuthnot's words seemed about as great originality in the way of speech as she was mistress of.

"Geoffrey must have sounded my husband's praises to you pretty often. That is a right good point of poor Geff's, his love and admiration for Gaston. At Cambridge he was called the handsome

American. I know it," said Dinah, with earnestness which became these sweet lips of hers mightily, "because Aunt Susan had relations in the town, on Market Hill, you know. Before my marriage we used to hear something flattering of Gaston every day. It is the same in London. The tailors will give him any credit. I believe they would make his coats gratis so long as they got his promise to wear them."

"And Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot?" It cost Marjorie no small effort just then to force Geff's name from her lips. "What relationship is there between him and you?"

"Geoffrey is our first cousin. His father and my husband's died, both of them, when their children were young. Gaston has always been Geoffrey's good genius." In saying this Dinah believed herself to be enunciating truth, clear as crystal. "They did not meet as boys. Geoffrey spent his young years in a gloomy city school. My husband was brought up—you can tell it, they say, by his accent—in Paris. When they came together in Cambridge nothing could be more different than their positions. Poor Geff, a scholar at John's, was forced to work without amusements, almost without friends, for his Tripos, while Gaston—"

"Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot had livelier things than work to think about," suggested Marjorie, as Gaston's wife paused.

"He was clever enough to come out first in any Tripos he had read for. But his friends would not let him read. He was sought after, popular," said Dinah, with a sigh, "just as you see him now. However, that made no difference for Geff. Gaston treated him like a younger brother always. He does so now. I have grown, myself, to think of Geoffrey as of a brother."

She stopped short, for Gaston Arbuthnot and Lord Rex Basire were now within hearing distance; Dr. Thorne, adhesive as goosegrass, addressing them by turns as he followed, with his nimble limp, in their steps.

"Yes, Mr. Arbuthnot, you must grant me my postulate." Dr. Thorne packed up all of nature or of books—chiefly of books—that came within his reach in little neatly labeled comprehensible forms, dilettante demonstrations of the universe ready for his own daily use and the misery of his fellows. "Grant, as a postulate, that the magnitudes we call molecules are realities, and the rest follows as a necessary deduction. Let us look around us at this moment. Evolution teaches us that these bright blooms we behold actually come into being through the color-sense of insects; and, and—Lord Rex Basire! you, I am sure, are fascinated by the subject!"

Lord Rex had not heard a syllable. Breaking away from Dr. Thorne, Lord Rex stood still, his eyes pointedly avoiding Dinah's face. Gaston, meanwhile, his hat held low, after the fashion of Broadway or the Boulevards, was saluting the two ladies, making Marjorie Bartrand's acquaintance, and jesting amicably with Dinah as to the march she had stolen upon himself and an unexpectant Sarnian world.

When two or three minutes had passed, Lord Rex gave evidence of his presence. Coming forward, he delivered a set little compliment to Marjorie Bartrand on the seigneur's roses. It was a source of agreeable satisfaction to Lord Rex Basire that the "Duc de Rohan" should have taken a first prize. He would like—

"The seigneur's dark roses have taken a prize every June show for the last quarter of a century," Marjorie interrupted him cruelly. "When once we islanders, flower-show judges included, get into a safe groove, we keep there."

"What an improving place Guernsey must be to live in!" Gaston Arbuthnot remarked. "I have been trying vainly through the best years of my life to keep in safe grooves."

"To *keep* in safe grooves!" repeated Marjorie, with rather stinging emphasis. "You would need to get into them first, would you not?"

"You are severe, Miss Bartrand." Gaston came over to the girl's side. "And I like it. Severity gives me a new sensation. Now, I am going to ask a favor which I can tell beforehand you will grant. I want you to show me these conquering Tintajeux roses. Tintajeux is not an unknown name to us."

Gaston added this last clause in a lower key, then watched to note how much the color would vary on her ever-varying face.

Under any other circumstances than the present ones Marjorie would, I think, have selected Gaston Arbuthnot as the type of human creature least to be encouraged under heaven. Was he not obtrusively good-looking, a popularity man, a dandy for whom Bond Street tailors would be content, as a flesh-and-blood block, a living advertisement, to stitch gratis? Was he not a coolly neglectful husband, a pleasure-seeker, a frequenter of the afternoon teas of frivolous, attention-loving women?

But in her rush of joyous surprise, of contradictory relief, in her gratitude to him for not being Geoffrey, the girl was ready to extend a hand of hearty friendship to Dinah's husband—during the first half hour of their acquaintance, at all events.

"You wish to see the Tintajeux roses? Come, then, and let me

play show-woman. Unfortunately," Marjorie added, "I don't know in which quarter of the globe the 'Duc de Rohan' lives."

"I believe I can guide you. I know the whereabouts of every stall in the Arsenal."

And Lord Rex neatly affixed himself to the party as Marjorie and Dinah rose.

Dinah's breath came short. She knew instinctively how the eyes of this pale-haired, sunburnt youth avoided her face, and in that avoidance read the fact of his admiration. She divined that Lord Rex's intention was to walk at her side. She foresaw, with terror, the necessity of conversation.

Gaston Arbuthnot gave his wife a quick, comprehensive look—Lord Chesterfield embodied in a glance! Then he went through a brief, informal word of introduction.

"Lord Rex Bashe, my wife. I fancied, Dinah, that you and Bashe had met already. Now, Miss Bartrand, let us make an exploring tour of the Arsenal. We shall reach the seigneur's dark roses, sooner or later. I look to you," Gaston added, "for enlightenment as to some of the human elements of the show."

Marjorie's mood was abundantly bright; the "enlightenment" was not slow of coming. Her prattle, with its brisk bitterish flavor, amused Gaston as he would have thought it impossible to be amused by any classico-mathematical girl extant. As they passed the bench that still supported Madame the Archdeaconess's sacerdotal weight, Marjorie broke into a laugh—that hearty, human, unmistakable laugh of hers. For Doctor Thorne stood beside the great female pillar of the Church, delivering an oration in his most verbose little manner, to which not only the archdeaconess, but the wives of the inferior clergy, listened with respect. And Marjorie's quick ear had caught his text.

"One ought not to laugh at our betters, Mr. Arbuthnot, ought one?"

Asking this, Marjorie looked gravely up in Gaston's face.

"It is so written in the copy-books, Miss Bartrand. For my part, I think the greatest good a man ever does his fellows is when he furnishes them, consciously or unconsciously, with materials for farce."

"At least, one should not laugh loud enough to be heard?"

"I think you ought to laugh very often, and loud enough for all the world to hear," replied Gaston.

"Doctor Thorne is too much for me; I have an old 'Sandford and Merton' among my books, and when I hear him talk, I think

of Mr. Barlow moralizing at Tommy. Mr. Barlow turned scientist. 'Grant, as a postulate, that the magnitudes we call molecules are realities—' 'Evolution teaches us that these bright blooms—' etc. Doctor Thorne's flower-show speech! We had it last autumn with the dahlias. We had it in the spring with the tulips. I heard him address it just now to that poor small boy, Lord Rex. Mrs. Corbie is orthodox to the core. I suppose he will make a big jump, as they do over the words in plays, when he gets to anything so brimstony as 'evolution.' "

The crowd, as it happened, was setting in the direction of the Tintajoux roses. By the time Gaston and Marjorie had made their way into front places before the stand, they discovered that Dinah and Lord Rex Basire had parted company from them in the crowd.

"I brought Mrs. Arbuthnot here. It was through my persuasion she laid down her cross-stitch," cried Marjorie, "and now we have let her fall victim to Lord Rex. How wearied she will be of him."

"I am not so sure of that. My wife has the old-fashioned weaknesses of the sex. The sight of a wounded soldier is dear to her. All women, at heart, are thoroughgoing Jingoites."

"I am not! I am an ultra, red-hot Radical," exclaimed Marjorie. "As to Lord Rex—I believe his wound was well long ago. He wears his arm in a sling to get up sympathy."

"It will secure Mrs. Arbuthnot's," said Gaston. Then: "What a world of good it will do my wife to have been here," he added warmly. "That is just what poor Dinah needs, to come out more, mix more with her fellow-creatures, brighten up her ideas; to lay down her cross-stitch, in short. That hits the nail on the head—to lay down her cross-stitch! It was charming of you to call on us, Miss Bartrand! I take it for granted, you see, that you have called. You heard of our existence probably from Geff?"

"I heard from Mr. Geoffrey that Mrs. Arbuthnot was staying at Miller's hotel."

But Marjorie's voice faltered. Her soul clothed itself in sack-cloth and ashes as she thought of her own error, of the *generous, delicate*, motives which had prompted her—Pharisee that she was!—to call on Dinah.

"Whatever Geff does comes to good. He can not take a mile-long walk without some man or woman being the better for it. Geff has a kind of genius for bringing about the welfare of other people."

At the mention of Geoffrey, every artificial trace left Gaston's

manner. The best of the man showed always, no matter how trifling the occasion, in the honest regard he bore his cousin.

"Now, look, Miss Bartrand, at the way Geff is spending his time in this island!"

Where Marjorie had suspected him of easy-going callousness, of philandering in the train of idle fine ladies, of singing French songs, of putting himself on the social and intellectual plane of a Major Tiedennis.

"Six hours a week must, I own, be grudged to him, the hours he spends at Tintajoux Mancir."

"Spare yourself the trouble of being polite, Mr. Arbuthnot. If you knew how I detest politeness!"

"But remember all his other hours." The art of thought reading was certainly to be reckoned among Gaston's accomplishments. Within ten minutes of his introduction to this little classico mathematical girl, behold him discoursing with cunning naturalness on the subject likeliest to interest her in the world—Geff's virtues! "Remember how his days, often his nights, are really passed."

"Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot reads, does he not?"

Marjorie gazed into the heart of a glorious Duc de Rohan with interest.

"Geoffrey reads, as I," said Gaston, passing into a lighter strain, "meant to read once. You look skeptical, Miss Bartrand! There was a time when I had bookish ambition. Yes, I talked, like many a fool before me, of going in for two Triposes, and left Cambridge without a degree. But Geff has a gigantic physique, a real hunger for hard work. He simply does not know the meaning of taking a holiday."

As they chatted, Gaston's eyes dwelt with artistic satisfaction on the girl's slender figure and hands, on the chiseled Southern face overkissed by sea and sun for some English tastes, but pure, fresh, as the wine-dark roses over which she bent.

"I am a sculptor by trade," he went on. "It might be truer to say a poor manufacturer of statuettes for the London market. Geff has told you how we get our daily bread, has he not?"

"My tutor speaks of little—beyond my reading," stammered Marjorie, still without meeting the penetrating glance of Gaston Arbuthnot.

"Well, even after work as light as mine, I find," said Gaston, with a clear conscience, "that amusement, varied in kind and ample of quantity, is needful. The heartiness of one's work seems determined to a nicety by the heartiness of one's play. Geoffrey

takes his recreation just now in the wards of the Guernsey hospital. There was a bad quarry accident the day after our arrival here—"

"I know," exclaimed Marjorie, paling. "The worst accident we have ever had at St. Sampson's."

"Geoffrey, I need not say, went to the fore as a volunteer. Between the poor lads in hospital, and those who lie, still, in the houses to which they were carried from the quarry, his hands are full. That is the way Geoff recreates himself."

For a good many seconds Marjorie was speechless. Could it be that conscious weakness—weakness in her, a Bartrand—hindered the girl from trusting her own voice? Then, giving Gaston her profile still, she turned brusquely aside from the Tintajoux roses and from the discussion of Geoffrey's qualities. She remembered her grandfather's dinner-hour. The sun was getting low. It would be only human to search for Mrs. Arbuthnot, and deliver her out of the hands of Lord Rex.

"We shall find them, perfectly happy, and eating ices," said Gaston. "Dinah's is not such a critical spirit as yours, Miss Bartrand. Let us bend our steps to the refreshment tent."

Dinah and Lord Rex were all this time advancing, haltingly, monosyllabically, toward acquaintanceship. Gaston's happy many-sidedness, his power of adapting himself, without effort, to the tastes and moods of others, were gifts in no manner shared by Lord Rex Basire. Dinah's intelligence differed about as widely from Marjorie Bartrand's as does placid English moonlight from a flash of tropical lightning.

Thus, starting, as a cleverer man might do, along beaten tracks, the first remark made by Lord Rex was meteorological:

"Splendid day this, isn't it, for a rose-show?"

"Certainly."

The chilling assent was not spoken for some seconds, Dinah's education having failed to inform her that the smallest platitude uttered by men and women when they meet in the world needs instant answer.

"As a rule, you see, one gets beastly weather for this sort of thing."

Silence.

"Festive gatherings, I mean, *und so weiter*. Speech-day at Eton was always the wettest day of the three hundred and sixty-five."

"Was it indeed, Lord Rex Basire?"

Dinah's gentle nature prompted her to be civil to all created be-

ings. She would be civil, kindly even, to this plain and sun-scorched boy who had elected to walk beside her, and whose eyes took so many covert glances of admiration at her face. In the heart of Eve's simplest daughter were such glances, one short quarter of an hour after introduction, ever registered as crime? Not only would Dinah be civil—knowing little of titles, and less as to their modes of application, she would fain give Lord Rex Basire the fullest benefit of his.

He paused, and doing so looked with a straighter gaze than heretofore at Gaston Arbuthnot's wife. She was surpassingly beautiful, fairer than any woman he had seen with his fleshly eyes or dreamed about in such soul as he possessed. Was she stupid? Not one whit for the higher feminine intelligence or the higher feminine culture did Lord Rex care. In society he held it woman's duty to supply him, Rex Basire, with straw for his conversational brick-making; hooks and eyes, don't you know! gleanings from the comic papers, hints at politics, easy openings for unsentimental sentiment. A distinctly stupid woman frightened him. "Makes one feel like being on one's legs for a speech," Lord Rex Basire would say.

"You are looking forward to a long stay in the island, I *hope*, Mrs. Arbuthnot."

At the italicized verb, Dinah's eyes turned on her companion with a vague distrust. Then she changed color. A rose-flush, vivid as sunset on snow, overspread her face. For she thought of Gaston.

"If you are a friend of my husband's, I can understand your wishing to keep us here."

There was a smile on her lips. The stiffness of her manner began visibly to relax.

Lord Rex for a moment was taken aback. Then he plucked up heart of grace. To see a married woman blush like a school-girl at the mention of her husband's name was a new and puzzling spectacle to him. He could scarcely flatter his vanity that he, personally, was receiving encouragement. Still, Dinah had smiled. And with the burden of conversation-making resting heavily on him, he was glad enough to follow any cue that might present itself.

"Friend? I should think so! Best fellow in the world, Arbuthnot—and a man of genius, too; good-all-round sort of man. Never heard a Briton sing French songs as he does. Rather proud of my own accent." As Lord Rex progressed in confidence, his speech grew more and more elliptic. "Sent to Paris in my infancy. Brought up by the Jesuits—there were Jesuits in those days,

you know—till I went to Eton. But Arbuthnot puts me in the shade, *ra-ther!*”

“Your lordship was brought up by the Jesuits!”

Side by side with many wholesome qualities, Dinah had inherited not a few of her yeoman forefathers’ prejudices. At the word “Jesuit,” she regarded Lord Rex with an interest that had in it almost the tender element of pity.

“I was. You look doubtful, you don’t think the fathers could give one such a Parisian roll of the ‘r’ as your husband’s?”

“Of that I’m ignorant, my lord. I am no French scholar. I thought of the Jesuits’ fearful undermined dealings.” Dinah gave a half shudder in the warm sunshine. “I thought of the doctrines they must have instilled into you.”

Undermined! From what sect or denomination could Arbuthnot have taken his handsome wife? That Dinah was a rustic “mixed up with the great bucolic interests,” Lord Rex felt certain. The Devonshire burr, the staid, shy, village manner betrayed her. What were her tenets? What sort of conscience had she? A Puritanical conscience, of course, but of what shade, what dimensions?

He harked warily back upon the safe subject of Gaston’s songs.

“Arbuthnot was singing to us magnificently last night. He was in his best form. Faure, himself, could never have given ‘A vingt ans’ in grander style. And then he was so well accompanied. The accompaniment is half the battle in ‘A vingt ans.’”

Gaston Arbuthnot, it should be explained, dined on the preceding night at the mess of the Maltshire Royals. He had dined at mess often of late, and on each occasion Dinah’s heart felt that it had got a reprieve. Dinah believed that dining at the mess of the Maltshire Royals meant, for one evening at least, seeing nothing of The Bungalow, and of Doctor and Mrs. Thorne.

“You have good musicians among you, no doubt. I know,” she observed, remembering long and not successful practicing of her own, “that the accompaniment of this song is hard. But it has become the fashion for young men to play the piano lately.”

“We can most of us get through a polka, played with one finger, or Malbrook. When I am alone,” said Lord Rex, “I execute the Marseillaise, with chords. No man in the regiment could play a true accompaniment to ‘A vingt ans.’”

“No? My husband played it for himself, then?” asked Dinah, unaccountably persistent.

“Not a bit of it! A singer never sings his best unless he stand,

head up, chest expanded." Lord Rex dramatized the operatic attitude as they walked. "Mrs. Thorne accompanied Arbuthnot—deliciously, as she always does."

It was seldom Dinah's policy to discover her feelings by speech. So much worldly wisdom she had learned, through most unworldly forbearance toward Gaston. Her complexion showed one of its overquick changes, her mouth fell. But she spoke not. That there must be deviation from truth somewhere, she divined, with a bitter personal sense of humiliation. But where? She shrank from the possible answer to this question.

A good-humored epitome of the dinner-party had been given by Gaston, over this morning's breakfast-table, for her own and Geoffrey's benefit. "The usual guest-night at mess. Curious how precisely alike all mess dinners are. The Engineer Colonel's never finished commencement, 'When we were in the lines before Sebastopol;' the major's tiger-slaying adventures in Bengal; the elderly captain's diatribes against Liberal Governments and enforced retirements, 'A man in the very prime—no, sir, a man before he is in the prime of life put on the shelf.' And the Irishman's story. And the subaltern's witticisms." Gaston, I say, had enlivened the breakfast-table with his lively putting together of these oft-used materials. He had made no reference to the singing of French songs, or to Linda Thorne.

Then Lord Rex Basire's memory must be at fault.

"You can not mean last night. You must be thinking of some former time. Mr. Arbuthnot dined with you at mess yesterday."

"Of course he did. After dinner we adjourned—we, the favored few, as our manner is, to The Bungalow."

"Where Mrs. Thorne played accompaniments for Gaston."

Dinah made the observation with mechanical self-control, hardly knowing what cold repetition of words this was that escaped her.

"Yes; we had quite a chamber concert. A lot of rehearsing that accompanying business seems to want! Hardly ever drop in at The Bungalow of an afternoon without finding them at the piano."

Dinah knew a moment's cruel pain. There was a proud, hurt expression on her face. She stopped short, involuntarily. Then: "It would take much rehearsal," she said, "before I should play well enough to accompany Mr. Arbuthnot in public. But Mrs. Thorne seems clever nearly in everything. I wish I had her talents."

And she resumed her walk, and began to speak, the village shy-

ness thawing fast away about the flowers, and the music and the people.

It became clear as daylight to Lord Rex Basire that his society was duly valued.

CHAPTER XV.

A LOVE-LETTER.

WHEN Gaston and Marjorie approached the refreshment stall they saw a picture which many a genre artist, in ink or oils, might have been glad to study.

For there outside the tent stood Dinah Arbuthnot, fair and flushed. She and Lord Rex were eating ices, as Gaston, the materialist, predicted. The western light shone on Dinah's bright hair. It touched the rose she wore, and the outline of her lips and chin. Lord Rex, dutifully attentive, held her sunshade. An arch-deaconess with surroundings of inferior female clergy loomed large on the horizon. Nearer at hand was Linda Thorne, patiently enduring long stories of the tiger-slaying major's, while her eyes and ears were elsewhere. Sarnian society, generally, in dubious groups of twos and threes, looked on. It was Dinah's first step across the border of a new world.

Gaston Arbuthnot seized the points of the situation at a glance. He played the part that fell to him with acumen. Toward Dinah his manner was simply irreproachable. So thought Marjorie, no overlenient judge; so, from afar, thought Linda Thorne. It were premature to hint at any forecasting of storm in Dinah's own hot heart! He insisted upon supporting his wife's plate while she finished her ice. He contrived to bring her and Linda so far into friendly juxtaposition that at parting a chilly handshake was exchanged between these ladies. But he also was true to his colors. He had come to the rose-show in Mrs. Thorne's society; in her society he remained. The last glimpse Marjorie got of her new friends revealed a perspective of Linda with sprightly energy pointing out distant roses to Mr. Arbuthnot, while Dinah walked slowly homeward from the Arsenal gates, Lord Rex at her side.

Had the afternoon been one of unmixed good? Had her interference with the Arbuthnot trio brought about good at all? Marjorie asked herself these questions as she urged her ponies to a gallop along the Tintajoux high-road. That she had discovered a foolish error appositely, might be matter for congratulation so far as pride

went! Had she performed a very generous or delicate action in bringing untaught Dinah from her cross-stitch, pushing her into the glare of public notice, obliging her to tolerate the attention of a man like Rex Basire? If, unprompted by the Bartrand thirst for governing, she had left destiny to itself, had been content, as in old times, to help in the hay field, or the dairy at home, might not her day's work have been fruitfuler?

Dinner had waited long when she reached Tintajoux, and the seigneur was in the disposition most dreaded of Marjorie throughout the meal. He talked more than his custom, displayed a genial and grand-paternal interest in her doings at the Arsenal. Tintajoux had taken a first prize, of course. And how did the Duc de Rohan look among the baser herd? Was he well placed? In sun or in shadow? Marjorie, the seigneur *supposed*, had scarce found time, among her numerous friends, to give a glance that way.

"I looked more at our roses than at any in the show," said Marjorie, truthfully. Were not her eyes fixed downcast on the Duc de Rohan, when Gaston Arbuthnot talked to her of Geff? "Would you believe, sir, that the Hauterive Corbies have taken a prize? I think the archdeaconess would sooner have been cut out by any farmer in the island than by her husband's cousin."

"No need to tell me the local tittle-tattle. On that head Cassandra Tighe has been a more than sufficient oracle. By the bye, witch," with the memory of overboiled fish strong upon him the seigneur turned his piercing old gaze toward his granddaughter, "Cassandra informs me that Mrs. Arbuthnot is an extraordinarily pretty woman; good, too, as she is pretty. Your tutor shows poor taste in dancing attendance on anything so rapidly commonplace as Doctor Thorne's Indian wife."

Marjorie Bartrand who, three weeks ago, had never changed color before mortal, was conscious, at this moment, of blushing furiously before the Reverend Andros. Still more did she quail under the eyes of Sylvestre, who stood, in his faded puce and silver, listening, with the unabashed frankness that characterizes servants of his age and nation, to their talk. From her grandfather all she need fear was a little searching banter, directed toward herself. Let the dramatic instincts of Sylvestre be aroused, and he was capable of waylaying Geoffrey Arbuthnot—yes, and of inviting confidence respecting the most intimate family concerns at Geff's next visit. It needs personal acquaintance with a Frenchman of Sylvestre's type to realize how the passion for scandalettes, smolder-

ing through long years of solitude and disuse, would be ready at the first handful of fuel supplied to break forth anew!

"Doctor and Mrs. Thorne were at the rose-show. The proceeds of the refreshment stall go, this June, to some sort of charity, so Mrs. Thorne, of course, presided there. But Mrs. Thorne is one of the people I never can find two words to say to."

"Our solemn-eyed Cantab finds a great many more than two words, it would appear. Let me help you to a merry-thought, witch. You have nothing but bones on your plate."

Marjorie picked her merry thought, as she finished her dinner, in silence. Over dessert, however—Sylvestre's inquisitive face fairly vanished from the scene—she plucked up courage and spoke:

"We have been making nimble but ridiculous conjectures, sir. One could not well speak of this before Sylvestre. Miss Tighe made sure of the Arbuthnot family history, you know, and—"

"Avoid expletives. I know nothing, until it is your pleasure to inform my ignorance."

"I mean Cassandra believed, from whispers she heard in Petersport, that Mrs. Arbuthnot was kept too much in the background. It would be a right and kindly thing, we thought, for me to call on her, and so—and so—"

"Take your time, Marjorie; slur over nothing. We have a long evening before us."

"Well, sir," desperately, "I called. And our solemn-eyed Cantab is not a married man at all. The name of the Mr. Arbuthnot who dances attend—who visits at Dr. Thorne's house, is Gaston. He is a cousin of Geoff's. I—I mean of my tutor's."

The seigneur looked deliberately at his granddaughter's face. Then, as though politely reluctant to take further notice of her embarrassment, he lifted his gaze to a full-length portrait in pastels, of some bewigged and powdered Bartrand on the opposite wall.

"And why should we not speak of Miss Tighe's mistake, of Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's celibacy, before Sylvestre? Remember the rascal's Gallican blood—Sylvestre requires an occasional bit of comedy more than any of us. And so you have been acting a charade, my love, solemn-eyed tutor and all. A very pretty charade, upon my word!"

The Reverend Andros Bartrand laughed dryly. It was about the first time on record that he had addressed his granddaughter as "my love," and Marjorie was prompt to recognize latent sarcasm under the endearment. How terrible to reach old age, thought the child of seventeen—to read, to think, and yet outlive the power of

loving; intellect surviving heart by many a year, as bodily strength in the end must survive all. What had she ever been to him but a plaything! From the hour she arrived at Tintajoux with her tempers, her four-year-old tongue, her foreign ways, the necessity of keeping a kitten to gambol before the seigneur's study fire had possibly been done away with. Just that! She had diverted him. At the present day she might be picturesque, shed the pleasing charm of youth upon his lawn and dinner-table. She understood the arrangement of his books. She could dust his library to admiration. And she was not afraid of him! (Marjorie omitted this, the leading clause, from her mental summing-up of personal virtues.) She was not afraid of him! When did fearlessness fail of carrying weight with a cold, strong nature like the seigneur's? Though her color went and came, though her lips quivered under his irony, the girl was not afraid of him at this moment.

"I might have known, sir, that if I was distressed it would furnish you with amusement. That is our amiable Bartrand spirit, our way of showing sympathy with others."

"Distressed? You astonish me. Distressed at finding that an intelligent, studious young man is in possession of his freedom? The charade, we may almost call it the Arbuthnot drama, grows mightily puzzling to me, a spectator. Let our worthy Cantab be bachelor or Benedict. What concern is it of ours?"

Marjorie rose from the table, with difficulty choking back her tears. "I love gossip as little as any one," she said, coldly. "You introduced the Arbuthnots' name, sir, so I chose to mention that the Thornes' friend and my tutor are two distinct persons. And I have no interest in Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's concerns! And if a drama is being acted let me tell you, grandpapa, that I, for one, play no part in it. Like yourself, I am a spectator only."

Her tone was high, but when she reached the school-room—friendly sanctuary in many a dumb pain of her childhood—when she looked at the inkstained desk, the piles of books, the window through which the China roses peeped, her humor changed. Marjorie stood a self-convicted impostor in her own sight. For she knew that she was not a spectator only in the Arbuthnot drama, that she was not unmoved by the discovery of Geoffrey's freedom.

"Bachelor or Benedict, what concern is it of ours?" She knew, also, that under the seigneur's irony lurked wholesome truth. Pluming herself on her own strength, on the Bartrand immunity from vulgar human error, she had drifted into a position from which the pride of any simple village maiden must recoil. She re-

membered her airs of easy patronage toward Geoffrey, from the first evening when he walked out to Tintajoux on approval, until this morning. What could she have seemed like in his sight? Had he rated her as an overforward Miss-in-her-teens, a hoyden wearing her heart—ah, shame! upon her sleeve? Or had he doubted her, worse humiliation, still, as every honest man must doubt a girl who under the convenient shield of Greek and Euclid, could lend herself to the small meanness of coquetry?

She walked to the window, buried her face amongst the cold, swift-falling rose-petals, then looked out on the landscape. Something strange had crept into its familiarity. There trotted Sylvestre, rake in hand, his livery exchanged for a fustian jacket, to the clover field. There were the farm buildings, there was the row of poplars, showing distinct against the sunset. The China roses gave out their faint evanescent odor; the big vault of Northern sky was stainless. And here was Marjorie Bartrand, to all outward seeming the same Marjorie Bartrand as yesterday, but out of tune, for some queer reason, with her surroundings. The dew smelling roses, the poplars, the farm buildings, yes, old Sylvestre himself, had been her friends through her whole span of childish life. With the new life that was awakening, with the stir of alien emotion in her breast, they were unsympathetic. Geoffrey Arbuthnot—what Geoffrey thought of her, what Geoffrey felt toward her—these were the questions burning in Marjorie's soul, transforming her, as no lengthening of skirts or plaiting of hair had ever done, from a child to a woman.

Suddenly a man's quick step advanced along the gravel road that led from the side lodge to the manoir. The step stopped; Marjorie heard her grandfather's voice. She put her head forth through the window, hoping, dreading that Geff, repentant after their half quarrel of the forenoon, might have walked out to Tintajoux—to be forgiven. In lieu of Geff's stalwart outline, the diminutive figure of the country postman met her sight. The seigneur, ready, always ready as a boy for the moment's amusement, was overlooking the contents of the village letter bag.

"A letter for you, witch." Clear, resonant, rang the old voice, as Andros Bartrand caught sight of Marjorie. "A letter and a bulky one. The address is written in a hand that savors of the Alma Mater. The postmark is 'Local.' I am to open it for you, of course?"

"If you do, I start for Spain to-night—this moment!" cried Marjorie, with fine, Bartrand presence of temper—her grandfather

meanwhile proceeding, in pantomime, to carry out his suggestion. "If you do, sir—"

But the sequel of the threat remained unspoken. Away flew Marjorie through the low school-room window, away, without drawing breath, over flower border, over lawn, till she reached the seigneur. A few seconds later, her letter—her first love-letter, whispered a voice in the white and girlish conscience—lay with seal unbroken between her hands.

She could not read it here, under this open largeness of air and sky, with her grandfather's searching eyes fixed on her face. She must heighten her pleasure, as not so many summers back she was wont to heighten the coveted flavor of peach or nectarine, by eked-out anticipation. Not here, not in the school-room, peopled by commonplace remembrances of Sophie le Patourel and all the long train of Sophie's predecessors. In this ineffable moment (are not our mistakes the sweetest things we taste on earth?) she must be alone, must know that a bolt was drawn between her happiness and the world. She entered the house with eager limbs, sped up the stairs, light still with the brief flicker that comes between sunset and dusk. She sought the shelter of her own room; a little white-draped room, where fragrant alder-blooms, flecks of foam on a deep green sea of foliage, brushed the casement, where you could feel the coolness from the orchards, where only the tired evening call of the cuckoo, the murmur of late bees, still awerk in blossom dust, broke silence.

"Miss Marjorie Bartrand, Tintajoux Manoir, Guernsey."

Prolonging her suspense to the utmost, Marjorie ran over aloud each syllable that Geff Arbuthnot's hand had traced. Then, with fast-beating pulse, she opened the envelope, drew forth its contents, and prepared delightedly, to read.

The love-letter was written upon blue, most unloverlike fools-cap, and consisted of three words: "Geoffrey Arbuthnot's compliments." Within, carefully folded, lay Marjorie's waist-belt, intact, as when she looped it to his bunch of roses and bellotropes in the moonlight.

So she had won obedience. Even in the light matter of keeping or not keeping a tit of ribbon, she had had her way. And her breast swelled with disappointment, the hot tears rushed to her eyes. In this moment Marjorie Bartrand's illogical heart owned Geoffrey as its master.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RASH RESOLVE.

THE strength, the delicacy of Geff Arbuthnot's character were never better shown than in his present relations to Dinah.

'Weaker men pay allegiance readily enough to the passion under whose sway they happen to rest. Geff was loyal, with a fine, a rare fidelity to the love that had passed away. He was Dinah's brother, always. And the story of Saturday's rose-show told him, late that evening, by Dinah's lips, sufficed to fill him with a more than vague misgiving.

He had wished often, thinking over the difficult question of her welfare in his rough-and-ready way, that Dinah could be forcibly saved from solitude and cross-stitch. Lo! the rescuer was at hand. But the rescuer, Geoffrey Arbuthnot's common sense informed him, should be a very different Galahad to Lord Rex Basire. Acting on the moment's impulse, Marjorie Bartrand had made a tentative effort at lifting Gaston's wife into the fellowship of her kind. And the experiment was too successful. Dinah, so Geff divined, had scarcely taken one step in public, before the little hero of a lesser hour, the most popular man in his regiment, the most sought-after partner at the island balls, thought fit, the world looking on, to throw himself at her feet.

"And did you find pleasure in it all? Did you for a single moment feel amused to-day?"

Something in Geoffrey's voice suggested a sharper note of interrogation than was supplied by his words.

Dinah and Geff stood together on the same spot of lawn where we first heard the Arbuthnot trio talking of sentiment while they breakfasted. Gaston was dining out, whether at the Fort William mess or at Dr. Thorne's house Dinah had not sought to know. Of what avail to ask for truth when you have once been answered with a fable, no matter how prettily that fable was illustrated?

"I was pleased for a time. Gaston showed no anger at my coming. It amused me to hear Lord Rex Basire talking down, as he thought, to my rustic understanding. Then without warning," Dinah turned away: she looked at the pale horizon line of sea, "I had a few moments' horrible pain."

"You were ill!" exclaimed Geoffrey, uncertain of her drift.

"No, Geff, no. I don't mean such pain as people consult the doctors for. The pain was at my heart—a sickening doubt of every one—a feeling that I stood on one side and all the rest of the world on the other—a sudden despair of life! Geoffrey," she went on, "with the gay people walking about, and the flowers smelling sweet, and the music playing, it did seem to me for a few seconds' space that my heart must break."

"And on which side did you range me in your thoughts? Was I with you or with all the rest of the world?" asked Geoffrey Arbutnot.

These half confessions of Dinah's were no new experience to him. She never uttered an ungenerous suspicion of Gaston, never made a complaint as to her own neglected life. And still, a kind of moral moan had of late been constantly in poor Dinah's talk. The warm woman's heart, ill at rest, jealous, with no wholesome work or interest to keep emotion subordinate, was always, unconsciously, on the brink of betraying its secret.

He looked with pity that could never tire at her averted face.

"You, Geff?" she cried, putting on a brighter tone. "Why, you were on my side, of course. You do everything good that is done for me in this world. Through you, for certain, Miss Bartrand came all the way from Tintajoux to call on me."

"Don't give me credit on that score. Marjorie Bartrand's doings are guided by no living person save Marjorie Bartrand. She had made up her mind to know you; had heard, doubtless, about you and Gaston among the islanders, and of her own free will sought you out. Count me for nothing," said Geoffrey Arbutnot, "in any action or caprice of Marjorie Bartrand's."

"Had heard about me and Gaston!" Dinah repeated his words with the preoccupation of morbidly stained feeling. "I think one may know pretty well what that means. No wonder so many people turned round to look at me at Saturday's rose-show."

"People turn to look at you generally, do they not, Mrs. Arbutnot? There is as much human nature, depend upon it, in the heart of the Channel as in Hyde Park or Piccadilly."

"That is more like a speech of Lord Rex Basire's than of yours!" cried Dinah, with a laugh unlike her own. "Throw in a lisp, varnished shoes, a waistcoat, and a double eyeglass, and I could believe it was his lordship, not Geff Arbutnot, who was condescending to talk to me."

"You must have put forth all your charity, have exercised a

great deal of wasted patience, in allowing his lordship to condescend at all."

Chiefly through Gaston's spirited character sketches over the breakfast-table, Geoffrey had long ago known with certainty what manner of man Lord Rex Basire was. Instead of answering, Dinah stooped above a head of garden lilies, the dense white of whose petals showed waxen and spotless through the gloom.

"I like the smell of lilies better than of all other flowers that blow," so after a minute her rich low voice came to Geoffrey; "I can never smell them, nor yet lavender, without thinking of Aunt Susan's garden at Lesser Cheriton."

Where Geff first saw her! The garden amidst whose crowding summer verdure he stood at the moment when his youth went from him, when Dinah and Gaston, hand clasped in hand, bent toward each other in the level sunlight. At this hour, with the whispers of a new love stirring in his heart, Geoffrey Arbuthnot could not hear that distant time spoken of, above all by Dinah's lips, without a thrill of the old passion, the old maddened, blinding sense of loss overcoming him.

"It might have been well for some of us," he began, "if we had never heard the name of Lesser Cheriton—"

But Dinah interrupted him quickly:

"No, Geoffrey, I can never believe that. If it means anything, it must mean I had better not have married Gaston. I should have no hope, no religion—I should be a woman ready for any desperate action—if I thought that my life, just as I have it, was not the one God had cut out for me as best. The fact is, you know, I have been too narrow," she went on hurriedly. "Something has been running in my mind all this evening—some idle talk of Lord Rex Basire's that I may repeat to you another time: and I begin to see my conduct in a new light. From the day Gaston married me I have been too narrow, far."

"In what way? Give me one or two specimens of your over-narrowness."

"I have tried to make the sayings of one class fit in with the doings of another. I have thought that right and wrong must be the same everywhere. This was my ignorance. If I had taken up—well, with Gaston's sort of opinions," she added, making an unsuccessful attempt at gayety, "it might be better for me and for him, too, now."

"I differ from you," said Geff, somewhat coldly. "Right and wrong are the same in every class. It would be an excellent thing

for your health and spirits to get more change, more society. Stop there! Remain forever," added Geff warmly, "in such ignorance as yours." And indeed the thought crossed him that, at this hour, what Dinah needed was safer anchorage, not wider ship-room. "Your happiness and Gaston's would be wrecked if you attempted to rule life by any other 'sayings' than your own."

But there was a goodly alloy of mild obstinacy in Dinah Arbuthnot's character. A given idea started, and she was slow to part with it. The recesses of her mind would seem to shut, with pertinacious closeness, over any decided impression, once made, and the key for opening these recesses could not always be found, even by Dinah herself.

From whatever source the sudden conviction of her narrowness arose, another four-and-twenty hours showed Geoffrey that the conviction was genuine. Dinah had made some kind of compact with herself, not only in the matter of opinions but of conduct. On the following day, Sunday, it happened that Lord Rex walked home with Mrs. Arbuthnot from morning service at the town church. Invited by Gaston, whose easy hospitality extended itself to most men, Lord Rex remained to lunch. He stayed on, long after Gaston's afternoon engagements had taken him elsewhere. And Dinah, although her cheeks flushed, her spirit chafed, endured this, her first experience in the difficult duties of a hostess, without complaint.

"Lord Rex Basire kept his Sabbath, it seems, in Miller's Hotel," observed Geff, when the Arbuthnot cousins were smoking, one his short brier pipe, the other a delicately flavored cigarette after dinner. Geoffrey's own Sabbath had been kept in the wards of the hospital, full to overflowing with the survivors of the quarry accident. "No wonder Dinah confesses to a headache. That lad's talk, a nice mixture of slang and assurance, judging from the specimens he gave us at lunch, would scarcely be of the nature Dinah loves."

"Oh, I don't know. Basire can be very fair company when he likes," said Gaston, with philosophic optimism. "He is not a giant, intellectually. But in their heart of hearts, Geff, however unflattering this may be to you and me, women don't care a straw for intellectual men—until they have been authoritatively labeled. The island ladies, from Madame the Archdeaconess downward, delight in Lord Rex, title, disabled arm, slang, assurance—all."

"Imagine five hours of him at a stretch. That is about what your wife had to live through to-day."

"Dinah is rousing herself, I hope and believe. It will do her all the good in the world to live through being bored." This was said with amiable imperturbability by Dinah's husband. "I trust for her own sake, poor girl, she is learning reason, beginning to discover there may be other music in the spheres besides that of the eternal domestic duo without accompaniment."

Geoffrey Arbuthnot puffed away at his pipe in silence.

"It was a great thing getting her to the rose-show. For that, Geff, I suspect, I must thank you." Gaston gave a penetrating glance at his cousin's face. "Miss Bartrand would certainly not have called on us but at your instigation, and through Miss Bartrand my poor Dinah has been introduced—well, to Lord Rex Basire, an Open Sesame! let us trust, to the strictly guarded gates of insular society."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FIRST CRUMPLED ROSE-LEAF.

REX BASIRE showed no disposition to let his newly made acquaintance with Dinah Arbuthnot cool. Long before the hour for visitors on Monday afternoon, Louise, the French waitress, entered the Arbuthnots' parlor. She placed before Dinah a card, also a bouquet made up entirely of white and costly hot-house flowers. Just like the bouquet Gaston gave her on her wedding morning! thought Dinah, with a rush of bitter sweet recollection.

"The monsieur who was here yesterday, le petit milor à la moustache blonde demanded the news of madame. Was madame visible? Should she, Louise, pray milor to enter?"

Dinah glanced with indifference at card and flowers alike, then she rose from her work-table. Gaston Arbuthnot, it happened, was at home, putting the finishing touches to "Dodo's Despair," in his improvised studio. Walking quickly to the open window, Dinah, in a whisper, appealed to her husband.

"Gaston, how shall I get rid of Lord Rex Basire? He has sent in his card and some flowers, as if flowers from a stranger could give one pleasure! He demands news of me, the French girl says, but that is too senseless. Tell me the civil way to—to—"

"Shut the door in his face," observed Gaston Arbuthnot, looking up from his model as Dinah hesitated. "Why shut the door at all? The poor boy will be better off talking to you than he would be making useless purchases for young ladies in the Petrapoit shops."

"But I am at work. I am counting off stitches for the forget-me-nots round Aunt Susan's ottoman, and then I shall come outside. I want no company but yours."

"Basire will help you to count forget-me-nots. The very employment he would delight in!"

And, raising his voice, Gaston Arbuthnot called cheerily to the servant that madame was visible. There was no time for Dinah to escape. In another minute Lord Rex had followed his hot-house bouquet, his card, and the French waitress into her presence.

She suffered him to possess her hand for one chill, unwilling instant. Determined, after a somewhat confused and halting fashion, to amend the error of her ways, to instruct herself, as in a book, in the usages of Gaston's world, poor Dinah shrunk like a child from the initiatory chapter of her lesson. She had endured Lord Rex, yesterday, in the spirit of martyrdom. But to-day, to-morrow! Over what space between the present time and September was her endurance to last?

"I was afraid, if I waited till the afternoon, you would be out, Mrs. Arbuthnot. And I have a weighty matter to put into your hands; I—I—mean an awfully great favor to ask of you."

Rex Basire, as garrison society knew him, was a youth weighted by no undue modesty, no obsolete chivalrous deference in his manner toward woman. He really shone, little though Dinah might appreciate such shining, as he stood, hesitating—for a moment half abashed—before the calm coldness of her face.

"You will forgive me for calling at this unholy hour?" he proceeded as she remained silent.

Dinah Arbuthnot glanced toward the flood of sunshine that rested on the flower-bright borders of Mr. Miller's garden.

"Why is the hour unholy?" she inquired, with slow gravity.

"I mean an hour when you were certain to be busy," said Lord Rex, approaching her work-table. "Now I can see I am interrupting you, Mrs. Arbuthnot, am I not?"

He drew forward a chair for Dinah; then, after standing for some appreciable time, and finding that she neither spoke to him nor looked at him, he seated himself, uninvited.

"Awful shame, isn't it, to interrupt you like this?"

"It does not matter much, my lord. My time was occupied in nothing more important than counting stitches for a border—that dreariest form of feminine arithmetic," Dinah's lips relaxed, "as my husband calls it."

"Does your husband say so really? Just what one might expect. All husbands are alike."

Modeling his clay outside, Mr. Arbuthnot smiled good-humoredly to himself at the remark.

"Now, to me—you mustn't mind my saying so—lovely woman is never so lovely as when she is absolutely a woman! Dead against the higher education business—girl graduates—platform females—you know the style of thing I mean. Only one out of my tribe of sisters, Vic, the eldest, works at her needle—my favorite sister from my cradle."

Rex Basire felt that he threw a shade of discriminative, yet unmistakable flattery into this avowal of family preference. Dinah held her peace, having in her possession none of those useful colloquial counters which less uninformed persons have agreed to accept as coin. Rex Basire's generalization about husbands lingered in her mind with unpleasant, with personal significance. Was it possible that Gaston's coolness toward her had become matter of comment in the idle little world to which Linda Thorne and Lord Rex Basire both belonged?

"I work at my needle," she remarked presently, "because I am not gifted enough to do better things. If I had talent, a tenth part of talent like Gaston's, I should not spend my time counting threads of canvas."

So the discriminative flattery had fallen through. Lord Rex tapped his exceedingly white teeth with the top of his cane. He searched diligently throughout the length and breadth of his brain for subject-matter, and found the land naked. His want of inspiration must, he began to think, be Mrs. Arbuthnot's fault. These constant allusions to the absent husband were crushingly unsuggestive; tended, indeed, toward irksomeness. Arbuthnot was a well-looking man enough, of the usual American type, clever, possibly, in his way—could knead up clay into droll little figures, and sing French songs without accent! It was distinctly not to listen to Gaston Arbuthnot's praises that Lord Rex had toiled under a hot sun, and at this "unholy hour," from Fort William Barracks up to Miller's Sarnian Hotel.

He asked himself if Dinah were really as beautiful as during the past two days and nights she had appeared before him in his dreams? With a world full of charming women, most of them disposed, thought Lord Rex, to value one adequately, were this particular woman's good graces high enough stakes to be worth playing for?

Was she really, if one watched her dispassionately, so beautiful?

Dinah set up her frame, and, leaning over it, began, or went through the semblance of beginning, to count her stitches. In doing so the line of down-bent golden head, the sweep of lash on the pink cheek, the outline of throat and shoulder, were given with full unconscious effect to Lord Rex. And the young man's heresy left him. Whatever his other skepticisms, he felt, while he lived, he could never doubt more on one subject, the flawlessness of Dinah Arbuthnot's beauty.

"Please let me help you in your dreary arithmetic, Mrs. Arbuthnot. Lend me a needle, at least, and give me a trial. I have only one hand to use, but I have been shown, often, how worsted-work stitches are counted." And, indeed, Rex Basire had had a pretty wide training in most unprofitable pursuits. "Each little painted square of the pattern goes for two threads, does it not?"

"I am sure I did not know gentlemen understood about cross-stitch!" And Dinah reluctantly surrendered her canvas to his outstretched hand. "Your lordship," she added, "will never make out the different shades of blue. This forget-me-not border is the most heart-breaking pattern I have worked."

Your lordship—your lordship! Gaston's face assumed an unwonted liveliness of color as his wife's voice reached him. Would Dinah never leave off talking as the young ladies talk behind the counters in glove shops, he asked himself? Would she never learn the common every-day titles by which men and women address each other in the world?

The clay was no longer plastic under Mr. Arbuthnot's touch. He moved without sound to the window. He took a discerning glance at the two people seated beside the table—Lord Rex with masculine awkward fingers solemnly parceling out canvas forget-me-nots, as though his commission depended on his accuracy; Dinah, a look of shy amusement on her face, demurely watching him.

Gaston Arbuthnot took one glance. Then he put aside his tools, wrapped a wet cloth hastily around "Dodo's Despair," and with a manner not devoid of a certain impatience, prepared to quit his studio. Could it be—the question presented itself unbidden—that a shadow of coming distrust had fallen on him? The thought was absurd. He, Gaston Arbuthnot, distrustful of the gentle, home-staying girl, whose devotion to himself had at times—poor Dinah—amounted to something worse than a fault, an inconvenience! That to-morrow's sun should rise in the east was

not a surer fact than that his wife's Griselda-like fidelity should endure to the end.

And still, in the inmost conscience of him, Gaston Arbuthnot was uncomfortable.

He had spent nearly four years of absolute trust—four golden years of youth, of love, with the sweetest companion that ever blessed the lot of erring man. In this moment he realized the sensation of the first crumpled rose-leaf. Commonly jealous he could not be. His temperament, the circumstances of his lot, forbade ignoble feeling. He knew that, for a man like Rex Basire, toleration must be the kindest sentiment that Dinah, with difficulty, could bring herself to entertain.

It was not jealousy, not distrust; it was simply the reversal of all past experience that disconcerted Gaston's mind. It was the whole abnormal picture—the diverted look on Dinah's face, her embroidery needle and canvas—*hers*—between Rex Basire's fingers, that was so blankly unwelcome in his sight.

If Gaston Arbuthnot ever in his life was an actor in a similar bit of drawing-room comedy, you may be sure the rôle chosen by him had been the one now played by Lord Rex. Some other fellow-mortal in a blouse, and with clay-stained hands, may have watched from the slips. It was Gaston who counted the stitches!

He was not cut out by Nature to take subordinate parts; and this his first little taste of abdicated power had a singularly insipid flavor to his palate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW DINAH SAID "YES."

REX BASIRE, meanwhile, counted manfully on. A hundred-and-ten from the corner scroll to the first line of blue; and seventy-six, either way, of grounding. Emboldened by success, he insisted upon filling in the yellow heart of a single forget-me-not. "Just as a souvenir!" he pleaded, contriving to get through the task cleverly enough. A twelvemonth hence, when half the world lay between them, he thought Mrs. Arbuthnot might look at the center of this forget-me-not, and remember to-day.

"I shall remember a length of filoselle wasted. Your lordship's stitches must be picked out at once—they are worked the wrong way of the silk." Taking back the needle and canvas, Dinah began to put her threat into instant execution. "A twelvemonth

hence," she added, "I hope to be looking at something more interesting than wool-work. Most of my pieces get stored away, for no one in particular. This ottoman is for my Aunt Susan in Cambridgeshire. It will be a great set-off to her front parlor"—Dinah admitted this with a tinge of artist's pride; "but I am not likely to see it there. We have not been to Cheriton for four years, and—"

"Happy Aunt Susan!" exclaimed Lord Rex, who was wont to be a little impudent without awakening anger. "What would I give to have—not an ottoman for my front parlor—but something modest, a kettle-holder with an appropriate motto, say, worked for me by fair and charitable fingers!"

"By your favorite sister's, perhaps."

Dinah's voice was cold and clear as ice as she offered the suggestion.

"You are in an unkind mood, Mrs. Arbuthnot. So unkind," Lord Rex took up a pair of scissors, and regarded them solemnly, as though they had been the shears of fate, "that I feel, beforehand, you mean to say, 'No' to everything I ask. I told you, did I not, that I had come to put a weighty matter into your hands?"

"Do nothing of the kind, my lord. I am unused to receiving favors from a stranger. Your flowers are very beautiful"—with a touch Dinah placed the bouquet two or three inches further from her—"and I dare say your lordship meant it kindly to bring them. That is enough! I live quite retired, and—"

Stopping short, Dinah colored violently. At this moment she heard Gaston's tread as he ran down the outer stone staircase. She knew that she was left alone with Rex Basire for just as long as Rex Basire might think fit to stay.

"But we hope to win a favor from *you*. The subalterns of the regiment are getting up a party for Wednesday, and we want to know if you will condescend to play hostess for us? We mean to be original," Lord Rex hurried on, not giving Dinah time to speak and refuse. "Instead of having a humdrum dance or dinner on terra-firma, we mean to charter a yacht—the 'Princess,' now lying in Guernsey harbor—and carry all the nicest-looking people in the island out to sea."

Dinah's eyes gave him a look of momentary but severe disapproval.

"For this, a hostess is imperatively needed. Chaperonage, in its most venerable form, we can command. I've been spending the forenoon, I give you my word I have, in paying court to old ladies. Miss Tighe smiles on our project. The archdeaconess does

not frown. Of course we have Mrs. Verschoyle. But we want a great deal more than venerable chaperons. We want a young and charming lady to do the honors for us. Mrs. Arbuthnot, we want you!"

Now Dinah's nature held as little commonplace vanity as could well fall to a woman's share; through commonplace vanity had Lord Rex never, at this juncture, won her to say "Yes." From pleasure, so-called, she had shrunk, more than ever, since the taste she got of pleasure at the rose-show—yes, during the very hours when, with rash strategy, she had been planning to act a part in Gaston Arbuthnot's world, among Gaston's friends.

But every human being, given a wide enough scope, must end by justifying the cynic's aphorism. The resisting powers of the best man, of the best woman living, have their price, so far as insignificant mundane matters are concerned.

No need to seek far for poor sore-hearted Dinah's price!

Whispers of the projected yachting party had, for several days past, reached her, chiefly in fragments of talk between her husband and the other boarders in Miller's Hotel. She knew that Gaston was an invited guest. She had an impression, based on air, and yet, like many a jealous fear, not all foundationless, that Linda Thorne was to be the quasi-hostess, the graceful presiding influence of the hour.

"Mc—you ask me?" she faltered, sensible of a blinding rush of temptation, and not lifting her eyes from the canvas where she had now effaced the last trace of Lord Rex's handiwork. "I should think others would be more suitable. I should think," the blood flushed her lips as she suggested the name, "that Mrs. Thorne—"

"Oh, we have decided, all of us, against Linda," said Lord Rex, with his usual cool sincerity. "Mrs. Thorne is the nicest woman going, on shore."

"Of that I am convinced."

"And she has been kind enough to murmur an experimental 'Yes,' though no one acknowledges to having asked her. (A suspicion goes about that it was Arbuthnot!) But Mrs. Thorne's qualities are not sea-going. She has not the marine foot, as your husband would say. She and the doctor will be of our party, of course, but Linda could never play the part of hostess for us. Oscar Jones took her and the De Carteret girls out sand-eeling—you know little Oscar, the one handsome fellow in the regiment?—and Mrs. Linda was seasick straight through the jolliest night of May moonlight. You like the ocean, I am sure, Mrs. Arbuthnot."

"Yes, I like it. Years ago, when we had not long been married, Mr. Arbuthnot hired a little cutter yacht. We spent four weeks at sea off the coast of Scotland. They were the happiest weeks of my life."

Dinah said this with her accustomed quiet reserve. Yet, had Lord Rex known her better, he might have discerned a tremor in her voice as she recalled those far-off days—days when neither mistrust nor coldness had marred the first ineffable joy of her love for Gaston Arbuthnot.

"That is all right; I am a second Byron myself. The sea is my passion. It would have been a sort of blow—I hope you understand me when I say that it would have been a sort of blow—to hear you say you were a bad sailor."

Dinah, who never helped out a flattering speech, direct or implied, looked away from him.

"A suspicion goes about that it was Arbuthnot." The words rang in her ears; light words, heedlessly spoken, yet destined to swell the total with which Gaston Arbuthnot was already too heavily credited on the balance-sheet of his wife's heart.

"We may count upon you, may we not? Arbuthnot has accepted for himself. Now we want your promise. If the weather continues like this we may rely upon seeing you on board the 'Princess' next Wednesday?"

"You have not explained what seeing me on board the 'Princess' means." Dinah's tone was evasive. Probably, thought Lord Rex, the puritanical conscience required time to collect itself! "I don't know, at my staid age," she added, "that I should countenance you. What did you say about carrying all the nice-looking people in Guernsey out to sea?"

Upon this slight whisper of encouragement Rex Basire entered voluminously into details. The proprieties—to begin, he declared, solemn of face, with the facts of greatest significance—the proprieties were set at rest. An undeniable archdeaconess, a Cassandra Tighe (minus nothing but her harp) were secured. The De Carteret girls, and Rosie Verschoye, four of the Guernsey beauties regnant, had accepted. It would be a high spring tide on Wednesday, and the "Princess" must start early to reach the Race of Alderney before the ebb. Afternoon would find them anchored off Langrune, in Normandy. "Where we shall land, observe the manners and customs of the natives, eat a French dinner, take our little whirl, perhaps, in the casino ball-room," said Lord Rex, "and so back, à la Pepys, to our virtuous homes."

"The scheme is too gay for me," cried Dinah, with an uneasy dread of Gaston's disapproval. "I never danced in my life. I hope—no, I am sure, my lord, that I shall never set foot inside the walls of a casino."

"Not of a French casino, Mrs. Arbuthnot?" Lord Rex argued, warily, still mindful of the puritanical note.

"Certainly not. A French casino! Why, that only makes it worse."

"A French casino is an innocent kind of sea-side dancing-school. Papas and mammas of families sit around. Small boys and girls exhibit their steps. Papa drinks his little glass of absinthe, mamma her tumbler of sugar-water. We go back to our hotel, hand in hand with the babies, at ten o'clock. Except the Zoölogical Gardens on week days, I know no human form of dissipation so mild as a French casino."

"I should have to meet too many strangers on board. I should be alone among them all. The only lady in Guernsey who has called on me is Geff's pupil, Miss Bartrand of Tintajoux."

"Who will be invited to come, under your charge?" Lord Rex adroitly left more delicate social questions untouched. "Marjorie Bartrand would be rough on a chaperon, I should think. Difficult to say whom the Girtonian of the future would not be rough on! But you, Mrs. Arbuthnot, seem to have stepped into her favor."

"And is Geoffrey to be asked?"

"Geoffrey? Ah, to be sure—your cousin. Senior wrangler, was he not?"

"Geoffrey took his honors in classics."

"Frightfully 'boss' man, any way. Does not look as if he cared about frivolous amusements in general, still—"

Lord Rex hesitated. Some finer prophetic sense informed him that Geoffrey Arbuthnot's might be a name as well omitted from the programme of pleasure he was chalking out with such zealous trouble for next Wednesday.

"But is the party to be frivolous? I hardly understood that. No one loves the sea better than Geff. He will go, I'm sure, if I go."

This was said by Dinah with conviction. Through long habit she had come to regard Geoffrey's obedience to her smallest wish as an accomplished fact.

"Notes shall be dispatched to Miss Bartrand and to your cousin without an hour's delay. I am awfully indebted to you, Mrs. Ar-

buthnot. You can't think what a load of moral obligation you have taken off my mind by saying 'Yes.' "

And when Lord Rex left Miller's Hotel he was radiant; a possibility of Geoffrey Arbuthnot saying "Yes" also, the one little shadow of a cloud that obscured next Wednesday's horizon.

On his return to Fort William, later on in the day, his road took him past the garden gate of Dr. Thorne's Bungalow. The gate stood open, and Lord Rex sauntered in, as it was the habit of unoccupied insular youth to do, during the afternoon hours of tea and gossip.

Small Rahnee and her ayah were picturesquely grouped upon a bright square of Persian carpet on the lawn. A macaw and two tame parrots gave a local, or eastern, color to the scene as they screeched from their perches among the garden shrubs. Within one of the drawing-room windows—bay windows opening to the ground—reposed Linda. Her dress was of embroidered Indian muslin, not absolutely innocent of darns, perhaps, for the doctor retained so much of old bachelor habit as to be his own housekeeper, and poor Linda must practice many a humiliating economy in her lot of femme incomprise. Bangles, similar to Rahnee's, concealed the outline of the lady's thin wrists. Her black hair, worn in a single coil, revealed sharply the outline of her head, Linda's one incontestably good point. The cunningly arranged shadow of a rose-colored window awning, if it did not hide, at least threw possible defects of complexion, suspicions of coming crow's-feet, into uncertainty.

Linda Thorne was not a pretty woman. Lord Rex, his eyes still dazzled by Dinah's wild-rose face, felt more than usually cognizant of the fact. And still, with Rahnee and the turbaned ayah, with the macaws and parrots, the embroidered Indian dress, the Indian-looking bungalow, Linda "composed" well. She formed the central figure of a Benjamin Constant picture, right pleasant to behold.

A hum of animated voices was in the air. Three or four young and pretty girls were distributed, spots of agreeable color, about Linda's sober-hued drawing-room. The prettiest of them all presided over a miniature tea-table drawn close beside the hostess at the open window. And the burden of everybody's talk, the clashing point of everybody's opinions, was next Wednesday's yachting-party.

"We are to start at seven. Mamma heard it from Captain Ozanne, himself."

"At midnight of Tuesday. The 'Princess' will be away twenty-four hours."

"A'week, at least, Rosie! And Madame Corble is to be chaperon."

"I heard—Cassandra Tighe."

"There are to be no chaperons worth speaking of, for of course—don't be offended, Linda—we can not look upon you as one, so—"

"So you are quite wrong, all of you," exclaimed Lord Rex, his head peeping up suddenly across Linda Thorne's shoulder. "Miss Verschoyle, will you give me a cup of tea if I promise to set you right in a few of your guesses? A cup of tea, and your protection, for I am certain to be well attacked."

"This stimulates our curiosity to the proper point," the young lady answered, with a doubtful smile, but making place for Lord Rex at her side. "At the same time, it is an admission you have been doing something rather less wise than usual. Do you take six or seven lumps of sugar in your tea, Lord Rex? I never remember the precise number."

Rosie Verschoyle was a bright-complexioned dimpled girl of nineteen, with an exactly proportioned waist (of society), an exactly correct profile, the exact mass of nut-brown hair that fashion requires descending to her brows, and a pair of large, nut-brown, somewhat spaniel-like eyes. Until Dinah's advent Lord Rex thought Rosie the fairest among the beauties regnant, and was openly her slave at all the picnics and garden-parties going. Miss Verschoyle had not the air of encouraging these attentions. She seldom lost a chance of making Rex Basire's vanity smart, and had been known to say that she positively disliked that plain, forward boy who managed to scare away really pleasant partners and monopolize one's best dances. And still, throughout the whole island society, among Rosie's more intimate girl-friends notably, there had been a growing suspicion for some time past that Miss Verschoyle would, one day, marry Lord Rex Basire.

"I take as many lumps as Miss Verschoyle chooses to give me." He received the cup with mock humility from her plump, white, inexpressive hands. "The sweets and bitters as they come."

"Bitters—in tea!" echoed Rosie, opening her brown eyes wide. "Steer clear of metaphors, Lord Rex. They really do not suit your style of eloquence."

"Rosie, Rosie! While you two children spar, the rest of us are dying of curiosity." The admonition was made in Linda's smoothest voice. "Lord Rex, recollect your promise. You know, you

are to set us all right. What are the plans for Wednesday? Why are we certain, when we have heard these plans, to attack you? Come here, and make confession."

Lord Rex perched himself, obediently, on a stool near Mrs. Thorne's feet. Then, sipping the tea sweetened for him by Rosie Verschoyle, with more trepidation of spirit, so he afterward owned, than he ever felt before the fire of an enemy, he thus began his shrift:

"We have made due inquiry from the harbor master, and find the 'Princess' must clear out as soon as the first English steamer is signaled. Will seven o'clock be too early for you all?"

A chorus of cheerfully acquiescent voices answered, "No."

"We have also invited Madame Corbie and the archdeacon. It seems, for an expedition of the kind, one ought to have a real substantial chaperon or two. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Thorne, but—"

"Oh, don't apologize," cried Linda, with good humor, willing, like most of her sex, to condone the accusation of over-youth.

"And Madame Corbie accepts, conditionally. I have been paying my court to aged ladies half the morning! So, unconditionally, does Miss Tighe. As regards chaperonage, one may say really—really—" hesitated Lord Rex, feeling in his guilty soul how red he grew, "one may say, Mrs. Thorne, that, in the matter of chaperons, there will be an embarrassment of riches."

"Especially as mamma never allows me to go anywhere without herself. Was it about the superabundance of chaperons that you knew we should attack you?"

Rosie Verschoyle asked the question in her gay, thin little voice, her unpremeditated manner, yet with a directness of aim that poor Lord Rex had not the cleverness to parry.

"Attack me? Why that was only a foolish joke, don't you know! Yes, we—we have Mrs. Verschoyle and the archdeaconess as chaperons-in-chief. Only, poor Mrs. Verschoyle, the moment the 'Princess' moves, will be in the cabin, and the archdeaconess—"

"Try not to look so conscious. The archdeaconess?"

"If the wind veers between this and Wednesday, will not start at all. And so, as we must have a married lady to do hostess for us, and as you, Mrs. Thorne, are also not a first-rate sailer, I have asked Mrs. Arbuthnot."

A heavy silence followed upon this announcement. Linda Thorne was the first to break it.

"And Mrs. Arbuthnot has accepted? I need hardly ask the question."

"Yes," returned Lord Rex, stanchly enough, "I am glad to say that Mrs. Arbuthnot has accepted."

Rosie Verschoyle turned over and examined a band of silver on her round white wrist.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot? Surely that is the same person we saw with Marjorie Bartrand at the rose-show? How wonderfully handsome she is! Mamma has talked of nothing else. One will be quite too glad to see her near. In these democratic days we must all bow unquestioningly before Beauty. The capital B renders it abstract."

Lord Rex felt the speech to be ungenerous. Vague questionings that he had once or twice held within himself, as to whether he might or might not be in danger of liking Miss Verschoyle too well, received an impromptu solution at this moment. He was in no danger at all, held the local estimate of her good looks, even, to be overstrained. As she stood before him, in her fullness of youthful grace, the delicate profile held aloft, the little cruel sentences escaping, one by one, from her pouting red lips, Rosie's prettiness seemed changed to Rex Basire as though the wand of some malignant fairy godmother had secretly touched her.

"My political opinions outstep democracy, Miss Verschoyle. But if I were as starched a Tory as—as my own father, by Jove! I should think Mrs. Arbuthnot's society an honor. I don't understand that sort of thing, the tone people put on in speaking of a woman whose only crime is her beauty."

"Mrs. Arbuthnot, if she needs a defender, is fortunate in possessing so warm a one."

The remark was made by Rosie Verschoyle, with unwise readiness.

"But one could never imagine her, poor dear, needing anything of the kind." It was Linda Thorne who spoke. "I have been introduced to Mrs. Arbuthnot by her husband. I have heard about her, also from him, and I am sure she is quite the most harmless of individuals. Not naturally bright! Like too many other gifted creatures, Mr. Arbuthnot may know the want of household sympathy—"

"Gets along capitally without it," interrupted Lord Rex. "Never saw any man better satisfied with himself and with his life than Arbuthnot."

"Not naturally bright, and lacking the education which, in more fortunate people, serves as a varnish to poorness of ability. If they

stay here long enough I shall persuade Mr. Arbuthnot, as a duty, to make his wife take lessons—in music, riding, calisthenics, anything to beguile her from that patient, that perpetual cross-stitch."

Lord Rex gave a searching look at Linda Thorne's face. His was no very high or luminous character, as will be seen in the after course of this history. Yet were his failings chiefly those of his age and circumstances. When he erred, it was without premeditation, walking along tracks trodden hard by others. His virtues were his own, and among these was the virtue of thorough straightforwardness. It trembled on Lord Rex's tongue to ask Linda a crucial question relative to Gaston Arbuthnot's "duty," when approaching footsteps made themselves heard along the gravel drive. There came a shrill shout of welcome in Rahnee's voice, a torrent of pigeon English, presumably from the ayah, in which the words "Missy 'Buthnot" might be distinguished. Linda Thorne's Indian-bleached cheeks assumed a just perceptible shade of red.

"Talk of angels," she observed, raising her finger to her lips, "and straightway we hear the flutter of their wings! It would be wise to choose a rather less invidious theme than the demerits of cross-stitch."

And then, almost before she finished speaking, Gaston Arbuthnot, with the quiet air of a man certain of the reception that awaits him, entered upon the scene.

Next Wednesday's yachting expedition continued to be the subject of talk among Linda's visitors. But it was talk with a difference; the character of Ophelia cut, by desire, from the play. Hard to bewail the lot of gifted creatures, or discuss the necessity, in these democratic days, of bowing down to Beauty, with Dinah's husband taking part in one's conversation! When the party had dispersed, however—Lord Rex, in spite of his disenchantment, escorting Rosie Verschoyle home—when Linda Thorne was left alone with Gaston Arbuthnot, she spoke her mind. And her tone was one which all her social knowledge, all her powers of self-command and self-effacement, failed to render sweet.

Now it was a peculiarity belonging to Gaston Arbuthnot's character, that he was apt to mystify every human creature, his cousin Geoffrey excepted, with whom his relations were near. The more intimate you became with this man, the less firm seemed the moral grip by which you held him. Dinah's over-diffident heart perpetually doubted the stability of his love. She was unhappy with him, dreading lest, in her society, he were not enough amused. She was unhappy away from him, dreading lest in her absence he

were amused too well! Linda Thorne was equally at fault as to the texture of his friendship. Long years ago, Gaston Arbuthnot's boyish good looks—perhaps, it must be owned, Gaston Arbuthnot's devoted attentions—won all of tender sentiment that Linda, then a neglected, overworked governess, had to give. She had been to India in the interval. She had learned the market worth of sentiment. There was Dr. Thorne—Rahnee! There were her duties, real and histrionic, to fill her life. And the days of her youth had reached the flickering hour before twilight.

But Linda had not forgiven Gaston Arbuthnot. She had not forgotten how near she once came to loving him. And she was sorely, unreasonably wounded, through vanity rather than through feeling, by Dinah's fresh and girlish charm.

An ancmalous positon; perhaps, a commoner one than some young wives, morbidly sensitive as to alien influence over their husbands, may suspect.

"So there has been a small imbroglio about Wednesday's arrangements! I can not tell you how glad I am to be relieved from a weight of sea-going responsibility. Mrs. Arbuthnot, I am sure, will enact hostess for our young subalterns so much more gracefully than I could. She is a good sailor, doubtless?"

Gaston had taken up a morsel of drawing-paper and some red chalk—every kind of artistic appliance had found its way, of late, into Mrs. Thorne's drawing-room—some ideal woman's face with beauty, with anger on it, was growing into life under his hand. He finished, in a few delicate, subtle touches, the shadow between a low Greek brow and eyelid ere he spoke.

"Dinah is a famous sailor. We look back to a little Scottish yachting tour we made, soon after our marriage, as about the best time of our lives."

Linda Thorne, a fair decipherer of surface feeling in general, could gather absolutely nothing from Gaston's level tone. He raised his eyes, during a steady second or two, from his paper; he met her interrogative glance with one of strict neutrality.

"I am relieved and at the same time stupidly inquisitive. Now, why, in the name of all things truthful, did you not mention that Mrs. Arbuthnot meant to go with us on Wednesday?"

Gaston was silent; too absorbed perhaps in his creation, slight chalk sketch though it was, to give heed to matter so unimportant as this which Linda pressed upon him.

"Possibly you were not aware that Mrs. Arbuthnot *was* going?"

Linda Thorne hazarded the remark with a suspicion of innocent malice.

"That really is the truth." Taking a folding-book from his breast, Gaston stored away his sketch carefully between its leaves. "You must excuse me, Mrs. Thorne. An idea struck me just now, suggested by a look I surprised on the face of Miss Verschoyle, and I hastened forthwith to make my memorandum. Dinah to enact hostess for the subalterns on Wednesday, do you say? Surely not. I could almost wish that it were to be so. But my wife, as you know, keeps to her own quiet way of life."

"We have Lord Rex Basire's word for it. According to Lord Rex, Mrs. Arbuthnot has most decidedly accepted their invitation."

"Dinah does not mean to go. Lord Rex deceives himself."

Gaston Arbuthnot spoke with sincerity. He had told Geoffrey, as a jest, that Dinah was turning over a new leaf, beginning to discover, poor girl, that there might be other music in the spheres besides that of the eternal domestic duo without accompaniment. Of Dinah's profoundly changed mood, her resolve of gaining wider views by frequenting a world which as yet she knew not, he was ignorant.

Linda Thorne watched him skeptically.

"Pray do not dash my hopes. I trust and I believe that Mrs. Arbuthnot will play hostess to us all next Wednesday. Come!" she added, with rather forced playfulness. "Will you make me a bet about it? I will give you any amount of odds you like, in Jouvin's best."

"It is against my principles to bet on a certainty, Mrs. Thorne. I am as certain that Dinah has not pledged herself for Wednesday's picnic as that I have pledged myself to dine with Doctor and Mrs. Thorne this evening."

But, in spite of his assured voice, a shade of restlessness was to be traced in Gaston Arbuthnot's manner. He would not remain, as it had become his habit to do, at The Bungalow, singing, or drawing, or chatting away the two hours between afternoon tea and dinner, in Linda's society. Even Rahnee (to Gaston's mind the first attraction in the house) must forego her usual game of hide-and-seek with "Missy 'Butnot." Even Rahnee threw her thin, bangled arms round her playmate's neck in vain. Frankly, so, at last, he was brought to make confession, he had forgotten to tell Dinah of his engagement, must hurry back, forthwith, to Miller's Hotel to set Dinah's heart at rest. Unnecessary? "Ah, Mrs.

Thorne," and as he spoke Gaston's eyes look straight into the lady's soul, "that question of necessity just depends upon the state of one's domestic legislation. Regarding these small matters, my wife and I, fortunately for ourselves, are in our honey-moon stage still."

This was always Gaston's tone in speaking of Dinah at The Bungalow. He painted truth in truth's brightest colors whenever he afforded Linda Thorne a glimpse of his own household happiness.

CHAPTER XIX.

GASTON ARBUTHNOT'S PHILOSOPHY.

THE first dressing-bell was ringing by the time he reached the hotel. Dinah's parlor was empty; her embroidery frame—silver paper shrouding its impossible forget-me-nots and auriculas from the light of heaven—stood on her work-table. Passing into the adjoining room without knocking, Mr. Arbuthnot beheld a sight not new to him, save as regarded the hour of the day—Dinah on her knees beside her bed, her head bowed, her face hidden between her hands.

She rose up hurriedly at the sound of her husband's entrance. She brushed away some tell-tale tears, not, however, before Gaston's quick glance had had opportunity to detect them.

All men dislike the sight of a wife in tears. A small minority may dislike the sight of a wife on her knees. Gaston Arbuthnot shared both prejudices. He concealed his irritation under a kiss—cold, mechanical, the recipient felt those kisses to be—bestowed on each of Dinah's flushing cheeks.

"I beg a thousand pardons for disturbing you at your prayers, my dear, but—"

"I was not praying. I wish I had been," interrupted Dinah, promptly. "To pray, one's heart must be at rest."

Now Gaston Arbuthnot looked upon all strong and unpleasant emotion with a feeling bordering on actual repugnance. And Dinah's voice had that in it which threatened storm. His irritation grew.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting a mood not calm enough for prayer (although it required a prayerful attitude), yet sad enough for tears. That terrible habit of weeping will wear away even your good looks in time, Dinah."

A time far distant, surely! Never had she been fairer in Gaston's

sight than at this moment, in her fresh cambric dinner dress, with her hair like a nimbus of gold around her forehead, with a color vermeil as any Italian dawn on the cheeks his lips had newly touched.

"I should like to keep my good looks till I am fifty years old, if good looks were only faithful servants, if they brought one only a taste of real happiness! As it is—"

"My dear girl, although you chance to be a little out of temper with life, don't forget you have a husband. I am a vain man—so you and Geff tell me—and the chief of all my vanities is, that I am blessed with a handsome wife."

"Out of temper with life? I think not, Gaston. Life has been sent me, the rugged with the smooth, and I must learn to fit myself to both. If I had been clever, I should have learned my lesson long ago. I must shape myself to things as they are, not want to shape them according to my poor village notions. I was trying to reason about it all just now."

"In an attitude that I misunderstood," observed Gaston Arbuthnot.

"I go on my knees when I need to think, clearly and humbly. I would not dare to say at such times that I pray."

Talk like this was beneath, or above, Gaston Arbuthnot's level. He told her so plainly.

"My afternoon has been passed in a thoroughly mundane and groveling manner, Dinah. I left this house at about three, just when you were giving Lord Rex Basire a lesson in cross-stitch! Since then, I have been spending my time, not in solemn thoughts that required genuflexion, but in listening to the last little version of the last little bit of island gossip. It seems you mean, after all, to go into the world where, as I have often told you, so many more sink than swim. You have accepted Rex Basire's invitation for the picnic next Wednesday?"

The accusation, if it were one, came with a sharpness of ring foreign to Gaston Arbuthnot's modulated voice. Dinah's color deepened.

"I have accepted Lord Rex Basire's invitation for Wednesday—yes."

"You can not, I think, mean to go. The picnic will be a helter-skelter kind of affair. It was got up by these young men in the first instance, more as a frolic than anything else, and—"

"You are going yourself, are you not, Gaston?"

"That is uncertain. I believe I did give a conditional consent

over the dinner-table, before it was at all sure the thing would come off."

"And Mrs. Thorne is going?"

"Oh, Linda goes everywhere. There is a legend that she and the doctor dined one night at mess."

"And Madame Corbie? Don't you think a party that is staid enough for an archdeacon's wife must be safe for me?"

It was Dinah who spoke; yet the tone, the words, were curiously unlike Dinah's. Some other woman, surely, stood in the place of her, who during four years had been as wax to every turn of Gaston Arbuthnot's will!

"I can see that you have made up your mind—confess, Dinah, you have run already to Madame Voisin's and ordered your dress for Wednesday?"

She turned away, impatiently, at the question.

"Well, I will not be unwise enough to argue. At least persuade Geoffrey to go too, get Geoffrey to take care of you. Had I been consulted," remarked Gaston, dryly, "I should have advised you to 'come out' anywhere rather than on a yacht hired, in this kind of way, by Lord Rex Basire and his brother subs."

"Gaston!"

"Oh, not because of the right or wrong of the thing. I don't," said Gaston, "go in for transcendental attitudes, morally or physically. My advice would have been simply offered on a matter of taste. You, my love, are doubtless the best judge. What time is it—seven? Then I have scarcely half an hour to dress."

"To dress!" faltered Dinah. "And my brier roses, our walk to Roscoff Common? I have been looking forward to it for days. Did you not promise to draw me some real brier roses for the finish of my border?"

"Of course, I promised, and of course I shall fulfill, my dear child. The Roscoff roses will keep."

"And you are going out to dinner again, Gaston?"

"Only to the Bungalow." Mr. Arbuthnot made a move toward the door of his dressing-room. "Mrs. Thorne is amiable enough generally to condone a morning-coat. To-night, I believe, there will be more of a party than usual."

Dinah rested her hand upon her husband's shoulder, but not with the clinging, imploring touch to which Gaston Arbuthnot was accustomed.

"If I could have an answer to one question I should be content," she exclaimed, almost with passion. "It is an answer you can

give. What are Mrs. Thorne's gifts? What is the cleverness which draws a man as difficult to please as you five days a week to her house?"

The situation had become critical. A feverish color burned on Dinah's face, her question was trenchant and desperately to the point. But it was just the hardest thing imaginable to get Gaston Arbuthnot into a tiptoe posture. The drama of his life, so he himself avowed, consisted, a good nine tenths of it, of carpenter's scenes. If he were forced to declaim some passage of high and tragic blank-verse it would inevitably sound like a bit of genteel comedy from his lips!

A husband of warmer temper, it would be unjust to say of warmer heart, must have kindled at the daring of Dinah's words, the ardent eagerness of her face.

Gaston Arbuthnot was interested rather than moved. He answered with the chill candor of an impartial judge:

"Linda's gifts? First on the list we must place the cardinal one of vocal silence. Mrs. Thorne does not sing."

"She can accompany other people who do," said Dinah, with imprudent significance.

"And can accompany them well. Have I ever told you, Dinah, how and where I first saw the lady who is now Doctor Thorne's wife?"

"You have not. You have never spoken to me about Mrs. Thorne's life, past or present."

Dinah's tone was as nearly acid as her full and rounded quality of voice permitted. She felt intuitively that Gaston would parry her question, as he had so often done before, by apposite narrative which yet led nowhither; felt that though every word he spoke might be true to the letter, the one truth of vital moment to herself would be in the words left unspoken.

"It was in Paris, my love, in long past days before I went to Cambridge; and when I was much less of an Englishman than I am now. My mother, with a wholesome dread of my artist friends, and of the Quartier Latin, cultivated what she called occasions of family life for me. One such occasion came to her hand. Under the same roof with us, but on a lower floor, as befitted their purse, lived a rich Jew family, with a bevy of young daughters and an English governess—"

"Linda Thorne?"

"At that time Linda Smythe. Yes, Linda Constantia was seated at a piano the first evening my mother forced me down to Madame

Benjamin's salon. I think I see her now, poor soul, playing accompaniments to the singing—the terrible operatic singing of Papa Benjamin. By and by we danced in a round, 'Have you seen the baker's girl?' 'Mary, scak thy bread in wine,' and other mild dances of the unmarried French mees. The governess remained at the piano still. 'Our good Smeeth! she knows so well to efface herself,' said Madame Benjamin, giving me a tumbler of sugar-water to present to my countrywoman. I might almost answer your question, Dinah, in Madame Benjamin's words—Linda Thorne understands perfectly the difficult social art of effacing one's self."

"Was she effaced at Saturday's rose-show?"

"She was a locum tenens, good-naturedly presiding over the refreshment stall for some friend with a sprained ankle."

"With an affection of the throat, Gaston. So the story ran, when you first told it me."

"You are severe, Dinah. If a pretty woman could possibly be tempted into feeling bitterly toward a plain one, I should say that you were bitter toward Linda Thorne."

Dinah was unsoftened by the compliment.

"To efface one's self," she repeated. "That means—in homely, plain English, such as I talk and understand?"

"To keep gracefully in the background while others fill the prominent parts," said Gaston with a laugh. "If you knew Linda Thorne better, if you could see her at one of her own charming little parties, you would appreciate the knack she has of not shining. She is quite the least selfish, least self-absorbed creature in the world."

Straight, warm, living, flew a denial from Dinah's lips.

"Mrs. Thorne is wrapped in selfishness! If she was a good, true woman she must guess how the hearts of other women, other wives, bleed, only at a thought of neglect! I can't cope with her, Gaston, for conversation. She was born and educated a lady, and I belong to the working people, less taught when I was a child than they are now. But that should make her generous. She is rich in good things—has she not got little Rahneé? And I have but the hope, weak that hope grows at times, of keeping your love."

A flush of annoyance overspread Gaston Arbuthnot's handsome face.

"If you would only take life in a quieter spirit, Dinah, content yourself with the moment's common happiness, like the rest of us! I speak in kindness, my dear girl." Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot here fell to examining his signet-ring closely, perhaps because he did

not wish to meet his wife's eyes. "If you would care for any mortal thing, in addition to that somewhat unworthy person, Gaston Arbuthnot, it would be better for us both."

Dinah turned deadly white.

"If the child had lived!" she uttered. "If we had her now, nearly the age of Rahnes, my heart would not be so athirst for love. It would come to me, naturally. Just as I am, no cleverer, or brighter, or more original, you might find my company sufficient, if we had the child."

"We can not cut out our lives by our own pattern," said Gaston, with irrefragable philosophy. "The disappointment, God knows, was bitterly keen to both of us at the time. Looking round the world, now, I am disposed to wonder sometimes, if the possession of a child be an unmixed blessing."

"It would have been so to me." The wound had never so thoroughly healed that Dinah could bear a careless touch on the cicatrice. "But I have no right to complain," she said this through her tears—"God gave, and took away. Who am I to question His wisdom?"

During several seconds Mr. Arbuthnot seemed to grow more and more absorbed in the contemplation of his ring; then, by an alert side movement, he contrived to reach the door of his dressing-room.

"You are going? You intend really to dine with the Thornes this evening?"

Dinah brushed her hand hastily across her eyes.

"Certainly, I intend to keep my engagement," answered Gaston Arbuthnot.

"You would not break it, if I asked you?"

"I would do any conceivable thing you asked me—with sufficient cause. I have too much opinion of your good taste to dread your ever placing yourself, or me, in a ridiculous position."

"If you would, I should give up all this plan for Wednesday. We would go back"—a soft far-off look stole over Dinah's face as though for a moment she indulged in the retrospect of some too-dear dream—"go back—ah! fool that I am—to the early days, days when you said the best dinner-party in London could not tempt you to leave me for an evening."

While she was speaking she had followed him. Her hand rested on his sleeve. Her eyes, with piteous, imploring earnestness, sought to read his face.

"There is no returning to old days," said Gaston Arbuthnot. "People of our age should have sense enough to realize this. The

exclusive boy-and-girl idolatry of one year of life would be rank absurdity in a dignified Darby and Joan of our standing."

Dinah shrunk away from him. Perhaps it occurred to her that exclusive idolatry had never existed at all on Gaston's side. How long, in truth, did he keep to the declaration, made in his honeymoon, of preferring quiet evenings with her to the best dinner-parties in London?

"When I came in just now, Dinah, I interrupted you at some spiritual exercise, not high enough to be called prayer, yet that required a kneeling attitude. It is a pity," said Mr. Arbuthnot, looking disagreeable, "that the self-communings of good people so seldom lead them to charity—I don't mean almsgiving—I mean a broader, more charitable frame of mind. If you could only recognize one fact, that there is a great variety of human nature about you in the world, it would be something gained."

"I know it, Gaston. What I want is to be lifted out of my own narrow ignorance."

"Take Geoffrey, for instance. In Geoffrey we have a man sound to the core. No caprice, no vanity, in our cousin, none of the discontent and levity, and thirst for amusement which disfigure some characters that might be named. For contrast," Gaston Arbuthnot's eyes rested discerningly on his wife, "look at Rex Basire—an empty-skulled little tailor's block doubtless, yet with a brave soldier's heart in him all the same! By the bye, my dear, I need not exhort you," he added, lightly, "to be charitable to Lord Rex. If women would only be as fair toward each other as they are toward us! I really admired the philosophy with which you gave that young gentleman his lesson in cross-stitch to-day."

The careless tone of banter brought back Dinah's accustomed self-control. Nothing so effectually checks emotion as the absence of emotion in our fellow-actors.

"Lord Rex was bent upon working three or four stitches in my ottoman. It cost me the trouble only of unpicking them, and when he asked my leave I was ignorant, I always am ignorant about the politeness of saying 'No.' That is what I must learn."

"The art of saying 'No,'" observed Mr. Arbuthnot, not in a very hearty voice.

"The art of speaking and acting—well, as Mrs. Thorne, as every woman of your world, would do! There's no going back to old days, Gaston. You are right there. I must shape myself to things as they are, not try to shape them to my needs. That is chiefly why I accepted the invitation for Wednesday. I mean to learn from

the example of others. I mean to turn over a new leaf from to-day."

"Keep true to your own transparent self, child. Be what you have been always, and I, for one, shall be contented."

CHAPTER XX.

"JAMES LEE'S WIFE."

THE speech was really the best chosen, prettiest thing that a somewhat errant husband could have found to say. In every moral encounter that befell Gaston Arbuthnot, and whether his antagonist floundered in the mud or no, Gaston seemed invariably to find himself at the last in a graceful attitude. But Dinah's heart was no more warmed by honeyed little phrases than by the reconciliatory kiss her husband bestowed on her, ere he started to his dinner-party. She was reaching—nay, had reached—the miserable stage when honeyed phrases and reconciliatory kisses are in themselves matters of distrust! How, her lonely dinner over, would she get through the evening hours—long counted-on hours—when she was to have walked, her hand within Gaston's arm, to distant Roscoff Common for her brier roses.

For a space Dinah looked listlessly forth at the garden. It was full of people who knew each other, who talked together in friendly voices—the boarders of the hotel, with whom Gaston mixed, with whom Gaston was popular. Then she seated herself before her embroidery frame. But recollections of Lord Rex Basire, of the effaced stitches, of Gaston's commentaries on her "patience," made the thought of work repugnant to her. If she could only read, she thought! Not after her dull, country pattern, repeating each word to herself as a child does his task, ere he can take in its meaning. If she could read for pleasure, as she had watched Geoffrey read—quickly, easily, with hearty human interest, like one bent on receiving counsel from some well-beloved friend!

A book of Geff's lay on the mantel-shelf. Dinah rose, crossed the room with languid steps, and took it in her hand. Then, as readers invariably do, to whom the shell of a book matters more than the kernel, she fell to a careful examination of the text, binding, title-page.

"The Poetical Works of Robert Browning. Vol. VI. *Dramatis Personæ*."

Well, four years ago, during the brief fortnight of Geoffrey's madness, it chanced one evening that he walked out to Lesser Cheriton with this very book in his pocket. (Did some ineffaceable rose odor of that dead June cling to the pages still, rendering Vol. VI. dearer in Geff's imagination than its fellows?) He read "James Lee's Wife" aloud to Dinah Thurston—a poem totally outside the girl's comprehension—and during the recital of which her decently suppressed yawns must have rebuffed any man less blindly in love than was Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

At "James Lee's Wife" the book opened now.

Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!"

Dinah read through the first stanzas untouched. Pretty love-warblings, the cry of a happy woman's heart—what had they to say to her, Dinah Arbuthnot? In the last stanza of "By the Fireside" her pulse gave a leap.

"Did a woman ever—would I knew!—
Watch the man—"

Dina went back to the window, the volume in her hand. She returned to the beginning of the poem, pored over it, line by line, stanza by stanza, in the fading light.

"Yet this turns now to a fault—there! there!
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 'tis all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song."

And when she had got thus far, the clouds of her ignorance lightened. She began to understand.

Shortly before ten o'clock entered Geoffrey. The parlor lamps were not lit. Dinah's figure was in dense shadow as she leaned, absorbed in her own thoughts, beside the open window. Geoffrey, believing the room empty, sung under his breath, as he groped his way across to the mantel-shelf: no very distinguishable tune—an ear for music was not among Geff's gifts—but with sufficient of a quick, triplet measure in it to recall a Spanish Barcadero that Marjorie Bartrand was fond of singing to herself.

To Dinah's sick heart the song was consciously wounding.

She had been so long used to Geff's undivided homage, that sense of power had little by little grown into tyranny, gentle rose-leaf tyranny, whose weight Geoffrey's broad shoulders bore without

effort, and yet having in its nature one of tyranny's inalienable qualities, lack of justice.

"Always in spirits, Geoffrey!" The reproach came to him through the gloom. "It is good to think, whether the day is dark or shining, our cousin Geoffrey can always sing."

Geoffrey was at her side in a moment.

"It is cruel to speak of my horrible groanings as singing, Mrs. Arbuthnot, crueler still to hint of them as betokening good spirits. Where is Gaston? You are back earlier than I expected from your walk to Roscoff."

"The walk fell through. I shall have to border my work with a rose pattern bought in the shops. Gaston was obliged to dine at Dr. Thorne's. He made the engagement, of course, without thinking of our walk. I ought never to have counted on those Roscoff wild roses. I—"

Dinah's voice lapsed, brokenly, into silence.

"If you would like the roses, you can have them by breakfast to-morrow," said Geoffrey. "Few things I should enjoy better than a six-mile trudge in the early morning."

"No, Geoffrey, no. Gaston always tells me that my bought patterns are atrocious, and the walk was planned by him, and he was to have sketched from the fresh briars by lamplight. My heart in it all is over. The Roscoff roses may go!"

As so much of weightier delight had been allowed to go, negligently, irrevocably, out of Dinah Arbuthnot's life. Dinah herself might not suggest the thought, but, to Geoffrey's mind, it was a vivid, a pathetic one.

"And why should you not take my escort? You know I am never burdened with engagements. Let us go to Roscoff to-morrow. You owe Miss Bartrand a visit. Well, we will take Tintajeux on our road, and make Marjorie show us the way to Roscoff Common."

"Miss Bartrand will not expect me to return her visit. She came here because—because you, dear Geff, with or without words, bade her come! I should never have courage to face the grandfather. Gaston would be the right person to call on the Seigneur of Tintajeux."

"The Seigneur of Tintajeux might think otherwise," Geoffrey laughed. "Old Andros Bartrand made minute inquiries about Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot the last time I saw him."

"About me—always the same story!" cried Dinah, uneasily.

• Why should people talk of us? What is there in my life, or in Gaston's, that need arouse so much curiosity?"

• "Shall I answer as your friend, Lord Rex, would do?"

"Answer truly. Geff, not like Lord Rex Basire, but like yourself."

• Why should the good people of Guernsey talk about you, do you ask? Because, Mrs. Arbuthnot, even in this country of fair faces, yours may have gained the reputation of being the fairest."

The speech would have fitted Lord Rex better. Geff was sensible in the darkness that his cheek reddened.

• "The fairest!" echoed poor Dinah, petulantly. "Oh, I sicken of the very word 'fair.' Shades of hair or of eyes, a white skin, a straight profile, how can people think twice of these trivial things? The woman best worth speaking about in Guernsey or elsewhere should be she, not with the fairest, but the happiest face."

Her own, certainly, was not happy to-night. Growing accustomed to the parlor's darkness, fitfully broken by a reflected light from one of the garden lamps outside, Geff could note her exceeding pallor. He could note, also, that Dinah Arbuthnot's eyes revealed no trace of tear-shedding, that a look rather of newly stirred interest, of awakening excitement, was in their depths.

• "And you have spent your evening, not only without Gaston, but without cross-stitch? It is a fresh experience," he told her gravely, "for you to be idle."

• "I read until the light went—don't you see—I have got hold of a book of yours? A book of verses that I did not understand when you tried to read it aloud to me at Lesser Cheriton."

• Ah, how, the old name, spoken by her tongue, stabbed him always! Geoffrey Arbuthnot bent his face above the volume in Dinah's hand.

• "Robert Browning. But for my bad reading, you ought to have liked these poems four years ago."

• "I think not, Geff. Uneducated people can like only where they feel. And in those young days"—oh, unconsciously cruel Dinah!—"I felt so little. But I have an object, now, in learning. I want to learn on all subjects, out of books as well as from life. That reminds me of something I had to say to you, Geff. Lord Rex Basire was calling on me this afternoon."

• "Lord Rex Basire was calling on you the greater part of yesterday."

• "And I took upon myself to accept an invitation for you. There will be a picnic party on Wednesday. It is some yachting expedi-

tion to the French coast, got up by the officers of the regiment, to which you will be asked—"

"But to which I shall certainly not go. I can get as far out to sea as I like with the fisher people. Wednesday is one of my busiest days."

"Miss Bartrand will be invited, too, if you are thinking of her."

"Miss Bartrand can do as she chooses. I have more important work than my two hours' reading at Tintajoux."

"If I ask you, Geoff, will you refuse?"

"I refuse, unconditionally. I hate gay parties. What mortal interest could I have in the society of men like Lord Rex Basire and his brother officers?"

"Only that I am going, that Gaston—I mean, I looked upon it as a matter of course you would accept, and—"

The words died on Dinah's lips. She had an unreasoning sensation that her firmest safety-ground was at this moment cut abruptly from her feet.

As she stood, faltering, uncertain, Geoffrey took the volume of Browning from her. It opened at page 58.

"Little girl with the poor coarse hand."

There was just sufficient light for him to make out the letters of the first line.

"Is this the poem you have been reading, Mrs. Arbuthnot? Why, I distinctly remember your pronouncing 'James Lee's Wife' to be meaningless."

"I have my lesson—shall understand," said Dinah. "'James Lee's Wife' is the story of a woman whose heart is broken."

And she turned from him. Geoffrey could only see her face in extreme profile. The cheek with its drawn oval, the exquisite, sad lips, showed in strong relief, like a cheek, like lips of marble, against the night sky.

He first broke silence.

"Do you care, seriously—do you care a fraction, one way or the other—about my accepting this invitation of Basire's for Wednesday?" he asked her. "Is it possible my going could be of help to you?"

A big lump in poor Dinah's throat kept her, during some moments, from speaking. Then with trembling eagerness her answer broke forth. She cared more seriously than she could say "about Geoffrey's not forsaking her." Gaston, of course, would be of the party, but then Gaston was so popular, so sure to be unapproach-

able! She would never, never want Geoffrey to martyrize himself again. It was the first great favor she had asked him. When she was once launched in the world, said Dinah, rallying with effort, she would know what to say and do and look, unhelped by a prompter.

And all Geff's hatred for gay parties, and for men like Lord Rex Basire and his brother officers, went to the winds. That Dinah was beginning to anatomize her pain unhelped by suggestion from without, that Dinah had grasped the subtle meaning of "James Lee's Wife," were facts that could not be lightly put aside. Her cry to himself, Geoffrey thought, was that of a child who seeks succor, from instinct, rather than from knowledge of his danger.

"The martyrdom would not last long," urged Dinah, misjudging his intention. "To any one so fond of the sea as you, Geff, twelve or fifteen hours on board a steamer are not much. We are to leave early in the morning and be back in Guernsey the following night. If you knew what a kindness you would be doing me!"

"I mean to go," said Geff Arbuthnot, shortly.

Twelve hours! He felt, just then, that he would pass twelve weeks, or months, on a steamer, if by so doing he could lighten one ounce of Dinah's burdens to her!

"And Gaston's conscience will be at rest," she exclaimed. "The truth is, you see, Gaston was not well pleased at my accepting at all. He bade me ask you, Geoffrey, to look after me."

To a more sophisticated mind than Geff's it might have occurred that the most fitting man to look after Gaston Arbuthnot's wife would be—Gaston Arbuthnot himself.

CHAPTER XXI.

"IS MY VIRGIL PASSABLE?"

I HAVE written that, in a softened and remorseful moment, Marjorie Bartrand's heart owned Geoffrey for its master.

In a character like Marjorie's, softened and remorseful moods are apt, however, to be intermittent. On the evening of Saturday her pride had melted, ay, to such a point that, holding her tutor's "love-letter" between her hands, she went into a storm of penitent tears—she, Marjorie Bartrand, whose boast had been that there was one woman in her British Majesty's domain who would shed tears for no man while she lived!

Looking back upon these things from the cool and bracing heights of a Tintajoux Sunday, the girl's stout spirit recoiled with derision

from the image of her own weakness. The seigneur's after-dinner sarcasm, she felt, with tingling cheek, was true of aim. She *had* played a part, unknowingly in the Arbuthnot drama; thanks to Cassandra Tighe, had no doubt treated Geoffrey with kindness not his due for the imaginary wife's sake! Now would everything be on a frigidly proper footing. Her tutor had shown very good sense in returning property that had wrongly fallen into his keeping. Whatever small halo of romance hung around his life was dispelled. The construction of Latin prose, the working out of mathematical problems, would henceforth go on with dignified and scholar-like serenity.

But, as a first step, Geoffrey Arbuthnot should hear the truth!

Old Andros happened to give a longer sermon than usual on this Sunday morning of June 26—a sermon wearing a French garb now, but which was first preached fifty years ago before the University of Oxford, and whose polished sentences breathed the safe and sleepy theology of its day. The whole of the congregation slept, save one; the gentlemanly optimism of eighteen hundred and thirty appealing moderately to hearers who in the evening would revive beneath the burning eloquence of some neighboring Bethesda of Zion. Marjorie, only, was awake; keen, restless, preternaturally stirred to mundane thoughts and desires as she had ever found herself, from her rebellious babyhood upward, under the inspiration of a high oak pew and monumental slabs. She thought over all her hours with Geoffrey from the first evening when she saw him in the Tintajoux drawing-room until their half quarrel on Saturday. She thought of her visit to Dinah, of the disillusionment wrought in her by the vision of French song-books and yellow-backed novels. She thought of the moment when she rescued her letter from the seigneur's hands! Happily, the comedy of errors approached its finish! Geoffrey Arbuthnot should hear the truth, should have his masculine vanity soothed by no further misinterpretation of her conduct. Into a debatable land where a mature woman, her heart already touched, had shrunk from venturing, Marjorie, with the madcap courage of seventeen, resolved to rush.

As a first step, Geoffrey Arbuthnot should hear the truth.

And this resolution, formed in the dim religious light of the Tintajoux family pew, did not melt away, like too many excellent Sunday purposes, under the secular warmth of work-a-day open air. When Geoffrey walked into Marjorie's school-room on Tuesday morning he found Grim Fate, in a pink chintz frock, with blossoming maidenly face, ready to place him in the outer cold forever.

"Good-day to you, Mr Arbuthnot." The girl held herself stiffly upright, with smileless lips, with hands safely imbedded in the pockets of her pinafore. "I was much obliged to you for returning my ribbon on Saturday, but I need not have put you to the trouble, to the expense of postage! I could have waited until to-day."

Geoffrey, a backward interpreter always of feminine petulancy, sought for no latent meaning in her words. Marjorie Bartrand had never looked sweeter to him than now, in her fresh summer frock, with a livelier damask than usual on her cheeks, and with her hands cruelly holding back from their wonted friendly greeting. He had it not in his heart, on this June morning, to find a fault in her, inheritor of all the sins of all the Bartrands though she might be.

"My poverty is heinous, Miss Bartrand, but I could just afford the penny stamp required for the postage of your waist-belt. After the lecture you read me on Saturday morning," went on Geff, good-humoredly, "I really dared not face you with that morsel of ribbon still in my possession."

Marjorie's lips lost their firmness. Taking her place at the school-room table, she cleared her throat twice. Then she pushed across a pile of copy-books in Geoffrey's direction. She signed to him to be seated, presented him with a bundle of pens, drew forward the inkstand. Finally, intrenched, as it were, behind the implements which defined their social relationship, she delivered herself of the following singular confession:

"When my lecture, as you please to call it, was given I did not know that *you* existed, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot."

"Miss Bartrand!"

"The lecture was meant, in good faith, for another person. If an apology is needed, there you have it! I—I had listened to idle gossip," said Marjorie, taking desperate courage at the sound of her own voice, "and so—I must say it out, little though I like such subjects—I thought you were a married man, sir. I thought so from the first evening you came here. I thought so until the hour when I saw Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot at the rose-show."

"And your motives—when you called on Dinah?" exclaimed Geoffrey, thrown off his guard.

"When I called on Mrs. Arbuthnot I believed her to be my tutor's wife. I had heard a great deal about her goodness and her beauty. And I had almost grown to hate you," added Marjorie,

with one of her terrible bursts of outspokenness, "for leaving such a woman as Dinah at home, neglected, while you amused yourself."

Then she lifted her eyes. She was startled to see how Geoffrey Arbuthnot's face had paled; paled under the incivility, so Marjorie supposed, of her speech.

"As a fact, of course, I never hated you at all." Her voice shook a little. "That gentle, beautiful Mrs. Arbuthnot is not your wife."

"Not my wife," echoed poor Geoffrey absently.

His tone was chill. Dipping a pen in the ink, he began to trace meaningless curves and lines on the cover of the exercise-book nearest his hand. During a few seconds he was obviously unmindful of his pupil's presence.

"Her lips, with their sad expression, haunt me," remarked Marjorie presently. "Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot, I should think, must be the most beautiful woman in the world."

"As she is certainly the truest and best." Geff had got back his self-possession. He spoke his credo as valiantly as though Marjorie Bartrand's eyes were not fixed upon him. "And so," he found voice to say, "you would actually believe, on hearsay evidence, that a girl like Dinah would have chosen me for her husband, and I—have neglected her?"

Geoffrey laughed, not very joyously, then taking up another copy-book he glanced with mechanical show of attention over a sentence or two of Marjorie's Latin translation. He held the page upside down—a fact which her memory, in after-times, might recall as significant.

"I honestly believed you to be married. Have you forgotten the first evening you walked out to Tintajoux—that evening when I told you the Bon Espoir was a good omen for our friendship?"

"A fortnight ago to-day. I have not forgotten it."

"I looked upon you as my friend before I saw you. I had heard your history—the history, it would seem, of your cousin Gaston! I honored a man who had had the courage of his opinions. I respected, I drew to you on account of the wife you had chosen. And now, Mr. Arbuthnot," exclaimed Marjorie hotly, "the comedy of errors is finished. I have learned my mistake, you see. And I trust that my apology has been sufficient."

This time Geoffrey broke into a fit of wholesome, unconstrained laughter.

"I am afraid I see through everything, Miss Bartrand. Your apologies say too much. I have been treated with humanity by

accident, and may count upon dark days for the future. That I am not married is my misfortune," he added, watching her face, "a misfortune which, if I could only thereby re-establish myself in your favor, I would gladly remedy."

"Would you? Do you mean—"

And then, looking up into her tutor's eyes, Marjorie knew that they were both of them talking unwisdom, were trenching as nearly on the forbidden ground of sentiment as a young man and woman who had met for the hard study of classics and mathematics could well do.

"I believe I got through some fair work yesterday," she remarked, with an air of cold business. "As to-morrow is to be wasted on folly, we may as well lose no time now. It is your system never to praise, sir—a good one, doubtless. Yet I hope you will think my Virgil passable. I *promise* you it was done without the crib."

Geft read the halting translation aloud, no longer holding the manuscript upside down. He did not think Marjorie's Virgil passable, and put the copy-book aside without a word of comment. He showed himself severer than usual over Greek aorists, was stringent, to cruelty, in regard of Marjorie's shakiest point, her mathematics. But at last when the professional work was over, when he had risen to take leave, Geoffrey Arbuthnot extended his hand to his pupil as the girl's heart knew he had never done before.

"You have tolerated me hitherto," he observed, "for my imaginary wife's sake. Do you think you can tolerate me, in future, for my own?"

With his eyes fixed on her face, her small fingers crushed in his grasp, Marjorie's cheeks turned the color of pomegranate.

"You know—you ought to have been the other Arbuthnot cousin," she stammered, glancing up under her long lashes, then drawing her hand away, waving.

"I ought, you think, to ^{let} ~~be~~ Gaston? He would never have pleaded, as I plead, for toleration. Every woman living would tolerate Gaston of her own free will."

"Save Marjorie Bartrand! Pray make one exception to your rule. I come of an arbitrary and stiff-necked race. We—we Tintajoux people belong to minorities. We like, in most cases dislike, where we can."

"Give me credit, for a short time longer, of being the other Arbuthnot cousin," Geoffrey whispered as he left her. "Dislike me

only as much as you did on that first evening when you gathered roses and heliotropes—for my wife!"

CHAPTER XXII.

LINDA AS AN ART CRITIC.

WEDNESDAY morning's sun rose cloudless. A few persistent fog wreaths lay, even as the day advanced, to leeward of the islands. There was an undue groundswell, although the surface of the water glistened, smooth as oil, when the high spring tide began to flow in from the Atlantic. None but an inveterate croaker could, however, prophesy actual mischief from signs so trivial. Lord Rex Basire declared aloud—certain of his guests arriving not as the time for departure drew nigh—that the day must have been manufactured expressly for the subalterns' picnic. No wind, no sea, a nicely tempered sun above one's head, a favorable tide—"What more," asked Lord Rex, "especially if one add the item of a powerful steamer, could the never satisfied heart of woman require?"

The heart of the most venerable woman in the island required that there should be neither groundswell nor fog-bank. At the eleventh hour came an excuse, on the score of weather, from Madame Corbie. The post of chaperon-in-chief stood vacant. Happily for the youthful hosts, Rosie Verschoyle's mother was faithful—a little white passive lady, accustomed to the iron rule of grown-up daughters, who only stipulated that she should lie down, within reach of smelling-salts, before leaving Guernsey harbor, and neither be spoken to nor looked at until they arrived in smooth water off the coast of France. Old Cassandra, in her scarlet cloak, was to the fore, with cans for fish, with crooks for sea-weed, with a butterfly-net, with stoppered bottles—Cassandra, burdened by a sole regret—that she had left her harp behind. If these young people had wished, in mid-ocean, to dance, how willingly would Cassandra have harped to them! Doctor Thorne and his Linda were punctual; so were the trio of pretty De Carteret sisters whom poor Mrs. Verschoyle, according to a trite figure of speech, was to "look after." And still Rex Basire glanced vainly along the harbor road for the only guests concerning whose advent he cared. The steam was up; the skipper stood ready on the bridge. In another ten minutes the "Princess" of necessity must quit her moorings, and still the sunshine of Dinah Arbuthnot's face was wanting.

"You look frightfully care-worn, Lord Rex," said Rosie Verschoyle with malicious intonation, as she followed the direction of his glances. "Pray, has your lobster salad not arrived? Is your ice melting? Or does some anxiety even yet more tragic disturb your peace?"

"There they are—no, by Jove! only the men. 'Twelve feet two of the Arbuthnot cousins!" exclaimed Lord Rex, with frank disrespect of Rosie's sympathy. "Is it possible Mrs. Arbuthnot can have thrown us over? The thought is too atrocious!"

The tall figures of Gaston and Geoffrey—twelve feet two of the Arbuthnot cousins—were descending by quick strides the stepway that forms a short cut from the High Town of Petersport to the quay. Before Rex Basire's disappointment had had time to formulate itself more coherently, a clatter of ponies' hoofs, a rush of wheels, made themselves heard round the corner of the adjacent harbor road. A few instants later, and the welcomest sight the world could, just then, have offered to Lord Rex was before him: Marjorie Bartrand, in her pony carriage, and at Marjorie's side, fairer than all summer mornings that ever dawned, the blushing lovely face of Dinah Arbuthnot.

"Have we to apologize? Are we really behind our time?" cried Gaston, as Lord Rex came forward to welcome them at the gangway. "It has been a case of the fox and the goose and the bunch of grapes. My wife would not start without Miss Bartrand; Geoff would not start without my wife. I was not allowed to start alone. The most delightful weather!—and the most delightful party," added Gaston, looking at the sunlit world around him with his pleasantest expression. "Miss Verschoyle, the Miss de Carerets—Marjorie Bartrand! Why, all the pretty faces in Guernsey are assembled on board the 'Princess'!"

The four or five hours that followed were hours destined to be marked with a red letter in the calendar of Dinah's life. She felt the youth at her heart, enjoyed the salt freshness of the morning, entered into the mirth and spirit of the expedition like a child. Gaston's conduct was unexceptionable. Before they had quitted the harbor, he took his place beside his wife—jotting down each new effect of sky or wave or passing fishing-boat in his note-book. He remained beside her throughout the voyage. The pretty island girls, capital sailors all of them, chatted in picturesque twos and threes with their bachelor hosts. Lord Rex Basire devoted himself, with a show of perfect impartiality, to every one.

If this was growing used to the perils of a factitious world, the

first plunge into a social vortex where more neophytes sink than swim, Dinah found the process distinctly pleasant. And I am afraid the thought of Linda, effaced for once, in grim earnestness, by all-effacing seasickness down below, failed to take the edge off Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot's enjoyment.

Herm, with its fringe of shell-spangled sands, was soon left behind. The high table-land of Sark became a fairy-like vision, hanging suspended, as on Mohammed's thread, between heaven and sea, ere it vanished out of ken. After an hour's steady steaming, Alderney's tall cliffs were sighted through the haze; and then, shortly before one, the south-west swell gave signs of lessening. The "Princess" was to leeward of the Point of Barfleur, and lunch, served after a desultory and scrambling fashion, began to find hearty welcome among the watchers on deck.

At the cheery whizzing of champagne corks old Doctor Thorne aroused himself from a comfortable siesta he had been enjoying in the bows, and came aft. The sight of Linda's husband, a tumbler of Moët in his hand, his puggareed hat pushed back from his sun-shriveled Indian visage, brought back the thought of Linda Thorne to the general mind.

"Mrs. Thorne! Shall Mrs. Thorne not have champagne sent to her?" cried Gaston, who was reclining, a picture of virtuous contentment, beside his wife. "Or, better still, now that we have a smooth deck, doctor, shall Mrs. Thorne not come up into the light of day?"

The old doctor shook his head as he accepted a goodly plate of lobster salad from the steward's boy.

"Poor girl! My poor dear Lin! A typically severe case of mal de mer always. Stop a bit—no hurry—just give me a trifle more of the dressing. I have collected a mass of data about seasick persons," observed the doctor, draining down his champagne, with relish, "and I am wholly against any attempt at nourishing them. Quite a mistake to administer stimulants. (Thank you, Lord Rex, you may give me another quarter of a tumbler of your excellent Moët.) A mistake to imagine persons as seasick as my poor wife can digest anything."

"I think you are disgracefully heartless, doctor," cried Rosie Verschöyle, in her thin gay accents. "Mrs. Thorne and dear mamma must require wine much more than all we well people. I declare it is positively shameful to think how we have been enjoying the voyage while they were in misery. Now, who will help me carry something to our poor martyrs below?"

"Who," of course meant Lord Rex Bastre. Following the airy flutter of Rosie Verschoyle's dress, Lord Rex dutifully assisted in conveying biscuits, champagne, and sympathetic messages to the martyrs—as far as the cabin door. Though the deck was smooth, Linda showed coyness as to returning thither. Her belief in human nature, especially in Gaston Arbuthnot's human nature, was, I fear, frailish. The livid cheeks, pale lips, and sunken eyes of recent sea-sickness were tests to which Linda, under no conditions, would have dreamed of exposing a sentimental friendship!

"Mrs. Thorne is quite too good—the dearest, most unselfish creature living!" Rosie Verschoyle announced these little facts before all hearers, on her return to upper air. "Doctor Thorne, I hope you are listening to my praises of your wife. Mrs. Thorne is not ill, not very ill herself, but she will not leave my poor frightened mother for a moment. I call that real, quiet heroism. In glorious weather like this to remain shut up in the cabin of a steamer for another person's sake!"

"Our good Smeet! She knows so well to efface herself."

There was a twinkle in Gaston Arbuthnot's shrewd eyes. Possibly, as Rosie Verschoyle spoke, the words of Madame Benjamin's eulogy came back to him.

A league or two beyond Barfleur a French pilot was signaled for, the pilotage from the Point to Langrune being tortuous and difficult. Does the reader know the fairness of that little-visited strip of Norman coast? Fairness at its zenith, perhaps, in April, when the orchards bordering the shore are heavy with white pear, or rose-pink apple bloom; when the blackthorn blossoms so lavishly that, if the wind be south, you may distinguish whiffs of the wild, half-bitter aroma far out at sea. But exquisite, too, on a late June day like this, the yellow clover in full harvest, the barley-fields ready for the sickle, the Caen-stone spires and homesteads standing out in white relief against the level horizon line of sky.

A French pilot was signaled for. After his coming the "Princess" steamed slower and ever slower eastward. By and by—Langrune already visible across the expanse of yellowish sea—it became observable that the vessel's movement could scarce be felt by those on board. The skipper stood consulting with the pilot on the bridge, the figures of the men at the wheel were motionless. There was a simultaneous hush in everybody's talk, a momentary tension of the breath at the thought of something happening! And then came the blank unmistakable order, "Stop her!" Before leaving Petersport wrong reckoning had been made as to the differ-

ence between the hour of ebb in Guernsey and along the coast of France; the skipper had no choice but to anchor. Would the passengers await the turn of the tide and deeper water, or land, by help of the boats, on some rocks within easy reach, and trust to getting ashore across a tract of wide wet sand as best they might?

The stout-nerved Guernsey girls, accustomed to scores of bigger adventures at sand-eeling parties and conger expeditions, laughed at the horrors of the position. With Cassandra Tighe as leader, these young women announced their determination of reaching the shore forthwith, though not dry-footed. Among the chaperons arose murmurs of contumacy. Poor Mrs. Verschoyle, a ghastly figure, emerging tremulously from the cabin, observed that she looked on all voluntary sea going excursions as a tempting of Providence. With a spot like L'Ancrese Common, not three miles from Petersport—L'Ancrese Common, where one could have the society of our excellent archdeacon and of Madame Corbie—*why*, said Mrs. Verschoyle, with the ascerbity of mortal digestive revolt—why put one's self at the mercy of tides and pilots at all?

Old Dr. Thorne was flatly rebellious. There was good champagne on board the "Princess," thought the doctor. There were Burmese cheeroots—a warm sun. There was the ultimate certainty of floating up with the tide.

"If any one be at a loss how to pass the afternoon hours let him take a siesta, or inquire if the skipper have a pack of cards stowed away. You see the wisdom of my remarks, I am sure, Lin, do you not?"

"I see the wisdom of them for you and me, my dear," said Lin, graciously. Under cover of a doubly folded gauze veil, protected by rice powder, a parasol, a well adjusted Indian shawl, Linda Thorne had at length committed herself to the cruel eye of noon. "My own election is to abide by Mrs. Verschoyle, whatever happens. I am afraid we shall hardly win over the young ones, Robbie, to our staid philosophy."

"If Rosie and Miss de Carterets land I shall land," said Mrs. Verschoyle, with dreary resignation.

The poor little lady's elder daughters were married. She had three girls in the school-room still. She had also boys. Chaperonage at balls and picnics, nursing of measles or scarlatina, love-affairs, school bills, breakages, all came to Mrs. Verschoyle as the burdens of her widowed, many childrened lot, heavy burdens to be borne under sorrowful protest. "If the picnic had only been at L'Ancrese Common," she repeated, "we should have the arch-

deacon and Madamc Corbie with us, and need never have got wet shoes at all."

A consultation with the skipper resulted in a general lowering of the boats. A quarter of an hour later the whole of the party, save the doctor, were landed on the Smaller Cancale, a reef of rock separated by a mile of treacherous sands from terra firma, and upon whose limited area a crowd of Parisians of both sexes were fishing—no, were following "*la pêche*" (the terms are not convertible)—after the guise and in the vestments sacred to the Parisian heart.

Mrs. Verschoyle sunk down on the first slippery point of rock that presented itself, vainly wishing, little though she loved the steamer, that her maternal duties had allowed her to remain there with the doctor and the sailors. Cassandra Tighe started off, the lightest-hearted of the party, perhaps, to hunt for zoöphytes and molluscs among the tide pools. The younger people, all, pronounced themselves in favor of an exploring walk inland before dinner—all except Mrs. Thorne.

"I mean to look after your mother, Rosie," said Linda, removing her double folds of gauze, as she took her place at the elder lady's side. "Please let me indulge my Indian laziness. Some one, positively, ought to stay with Mrs. Verschoyle, and I like to be that some one. It makes me remember my queer old governess days to find myself among Parisians." Linda was prone to these little bursts of retrospective humility. "And then, there is my husband! Robbie, no doubt, will eventually drift up with the tide. Quite too charming to leave all us, sober elders, together."

"Sober elders"—so Dinah realized with a contracting heart—was a sufficiently elastic term to embrace Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot. Before landing from the boats Gaston, with keen artistic vision, had described some marvelously pretty fisher-girl among the crowd of French people on the rocks. Not a real red-handed, rough-haired fisher-girl, but the latest Worth idea of a duly got-up *pêcheuse*, the very subject, Gaston declared, for his own meretricious pencil. He must make a stealthy study of her forthwith. And indeed, at this present moment, not many paces distant from Mrs. Verschoyle and her devoted friend, Gaston Arbuthnot, sketch-book in hand, was already at work.

Dinah lingered aimlessly. The desire of her heart was to stay beside her husband. Her pleasure would have been to watch his quick, clever pencil, to hear him discourse, in his light strain, about these foreigners, whose theatrical manners and dress, overwhelming to her in her ignorance, must to him be familiar. She felt that

the brightness of her day would be clouded if she left Gaston! And yet, mused Dinah, troubled of spirit, *do* wives, in society, hang jealously at their husbands' elbow, or watch their pencil, or listen to their talk with delight? Would she expose herself—far worse, would she expose Gaston to ridicule, by shirking the walking party?

An expressive glance, shot from Mr. Arbuthnot's eyes, set these questionings only too sharply at rest.

"Look carefully in through the cottage windows, Dinah." He bestowed on her a little valedictory wave of two fingers. "Capital bits of ware are still to be unearthed in these parts of the world. If you see a likely cup or saucer, get Geoffrey to talk French for you." Gaston Arbuthnot was a dabbler in most branches of bric-à-brac, and up to the present date had never lost money by his dealings. "Mrs. Thorne, when we have got rid of these young people, I want you to criticise me. My beautiful fishing-girl grows too much like a figure from the mode-books."

Linda Thorne, promptly obedient, took up her position at the artist's side.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SWAGGER AND A SWORD.

It was the hottest, most deserted hour of the day when the walking party reached Langrune plage, an hour when such of the young Parisians as do not follow la pêche drive donkey-carts—those wonderful, springless, seatless Langrune carts—along the country rounds, or start, by rail, to distant Trouville for toilets and distraction. Here and there were elderly ladies at work before the doors of their canvas bathing-sheds. In the road two portly fathers of families were solemnly sending up "messengers" to a very small Japanese kite some fifty or sixty feet above their heads. Two other middle-aged gentlemen played at battledore and shuttlecock. A few irrepressible boulevard lovers sat over their cards or dominoes outside the restaurant windows of the principal hotel. The shrill sounds from a fish auction held on the monster slab of rough granite which constitutes the Langrune market-place, alone broke the stillness.

Before one had thought it possible that dress or speech could have betrayed the nationality of the new-comers, up ran a brown-legged, tattered sand-imp, holding out a bunch of shore flowers.

He announced his name, with some pride of birth, as Jean Jacques la Ferté of these parts, offering his services as cicerone to the English strangers.

"The gentlemen, without doubt, make a pilgrimage to La Delivrande, half a league away up the country? At La Delivrande is the church, and the altar where the miracles are wrought. There are the little ships of the sailors, the crutches left by the cripples who get back the use of their legs. And for the ladies there are the stalls with the relics. "Every one in the country," ran on the child, with voluble distinctness—Jean Jacques, a source of revenue to his parents, was trained to speak good French with the visitors—"every one in the country who is sick gets cured. Every one who has a grand espoir goes to La Delivrande, and, if he has faith, attains it. Or so the curé says," added Jean Jacques, with a roll of his black eyes and a knowing shrug of the shoulders.

At seven years of age even sand imps, in these advanced French days, like to show we are no longer bound by the priestly superstitions that were well enough for our grandmothers.

Lord Rex made a free paraphrase of the child's narrative in English, and was witty thereupon. "Every one who is sick gets cured. Every one who has a grand espoir goes to La Delivrande, and, if he have faith, obtains it. Miss Verschoyle, what do you say? Have you a grand espoir? Have you faith? Shall we make our pilgrimage, confess our little peccadilloes, and get cured together?"

Miss Verschoyle rebuked his flippancy, but with lips less severe than her words. For Rosie's mood was a lenient one. Had not Lord Rex throughout the day conducted himself as well, really, as though that poor Mrs. Arbuthnot were non-existent? It was decided that every one had unfulfilled hopes, that every one stood in need of cure, and that a general confession of peccadilloes would be the best possible employment of the afternoon! In another five minutes the pilgrims were on their road, ragged Jean Jacques leading the way, toward the distant white twin spires of La Delivrande.

The place, I have said, was deserted; not so the lane, with quaint wooden houses on either side, which forms the High Street of Langrune. Here were bare-limbed, dark-faced fisher-lads, busily mending their nets; clear-starchers plying their delicate craft in the open air; housewives roasting coffee; peddlers chaffering over their outspread goods. Huge cats, with sleepy, watchful eyes, the sun shining comfortably on their ebon barred coats, reposed on the window-sills. Lace-makers were at work, their headgear antiquated as their faces, their bobbins twirling in and out the pins.

unerringly, as though they were the very threads of fate itself. Everywhere was the din of voices. Everywhere were open doors, open windows; and within, such plenitude of frugal cleanliness, such polished oak cupboards, such well-scoured cooking pans, such snow-white bed draperies, such balsams and geraniums in brilliant scarlet pots, as might have put a Dutch village to shame.

Marjorie Bartrand and Linah paused beside one of the lace-makers' chairs, allowing the more ardent of the pilgrims to get on ahead. A distinct shade of constraint was holding Marjorie and Geoff Arbuthnot aloof to-day. They had not met since yesterday's friendly parting. No further misunderstanding in respect of Geoff's celibacy was possible between them. But a change had come across Marjorie's manner toward her tutor. Geoffrey was sensible that she answered him with pungent and monosyllabic curtness during the whole of their outward voyage. And—seeing that among the knot of pretty Sarnian girls excellent temper reigned supreme, also that Geoffrey had joined the party for other motives than his own pleasure—one can scarcely wonder that this philosopher of four- and twenty suffered himself, without overdifficulty, to be consoled.

At the present moment, disappearing in the perspective of Langrune village, Geoffrey walked, to all outward seeming, well content, beside the prettiest and least wise of the three Miss de Carterets. Of which fact Marjorie took a brief and scornful note in her heart.

"One can imagine a man's becoming a senior wrangler." She made the remark to Dinah as they watched the everlasting bobbins whirl. "Yes, even I, with my halting Euclid and weak algebra (of which, no doubt, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot has spoken), can imagine a man's becoming a senior wrangler. I can no more conceive of bobbin-turning than I could of a world in which two and two shall make five."

Dinah's slower brain needed time for reflection. "There could not be a world where two and two make five," she observed with certainty. "And lace-making, once you have served your time, steadily, is easy enough. Two of my cousins, down Honiton way, are lace-makers, and I learned a little of it when I was a child. The number of threads looks hard to strangers, Miss Bartrand, but it just gets to one twirl of the bobbins in time. Many of the workers keep to the same pattern for life, when they know it well. After a bit, your fingers work without your eyes."

"How horrible! One twirl of the bobbins, one pattern, for life! And to think that lace-makers do not commit suicide by scores!"

"I don't know that there's much difference between lace-work, or wool-work, or plain sewing," said Dinah Arbuthnot. "We have, all of us, to go through with our day's task, whatever the stitch may be."

The speech came so naturally, was so fraught with unconscious womanly humility, that Marjorie felt abashed. What real heroism, of an incomprehensible kind, must not Gaston Arbuthnot's wife possess? This girl of two-and-twenty who worked perpetual cross-stitch, who kept her tongue and spirit calm, who loved, with scul and might, yonder *débonnaire* gentleman, of the handsome eyes and decorative smile, sketching charming Parisian fisher-girls on the beach—under Linda Thorne's criticism!

"If I speak hotly against needle-work, it is that I am thinking of Spain, my mother's country. In Spain, you must know, the miserable girls, to this hour, scarcely learn more than embroidery in their schools and convents, with reading enough, perhaps, to stumble through the announcement of a bull-fight, or decipher a love-letter. Of course," admitted Marjorie Bartrand, coldly, "it is said that when a woman marries, in England or in Spain, she must do as her husband wills. I never see the force of that 'must.' I think a woman should do what is right for herself, with large trust in Providence as to the rest! The question is not one that concerns me. Still, Mrs. Arbuthnot, one can not help feeling indignant about all very crushed people. I am dead against slavery, especially when slavery puts on a domestic garb."

By this time they had passed the last struggling house of Langrune. Fair level country, the fields already on the edge of harvest, spread around their road. Along the wayside path was a very mosaic of brilliantly blended hues, the corn-flowers blue and purple, the scarlet poppies, the white and gold of the wild camomile making up the purest chord of color. A slight south-west wind, dry and elastic after its transit over so many a league of sunny land, was invigorating as wine.

"How the spirit rises the moment one treads real solid earth!" cried Marjorie Bartrand. "I feel at this moment like walking straight off to Spain, the country I love and where my life will be spent! Why, with twenty francs apiece in our pockets, and camping out by night under stacks or hedges, you and I might easily reach the Peninsula on foot, Mrs. Arbuthnot."

Dinah's geography did not embolden her to hazard a contradiction. Something in Marjorie Bartrand's tone jarred on her reasonlessly. It were hard to believe that she considered Geff a man

likely to fall in love. Had not the conditions of her life for years put speculations as to Geoffrey's future happiness on one side? And still, a true daughter of Eve in every weakness belonging to the passion, Dinah was an inchoate match-maker. She would fain have seen the whole world blessed with such fireside beatitude as constituted her own ideal of highest good. With firm and true perception she had noticed a dozen trivial things of late, all proving Geff's imagination if not his heart to be in his teaching of Latin and Greek at Tintajoux Manoir. She had hoped that the notice taken of herself by Marjorie was an earnest of the pupil's liking for her master, had furtively and with misgiving dug the foundations of many an air-castle that Marjorie and Geff, at some far-off day, might jointly inhabit.

The girl's diatribes against domestic slavery, her open avowal of love for Spain and of her hopes of spending her life among Spanish people, caused a troubled look to come on Dinah's face.

"Ycur plans don't point toward an English home, Miss Bartrand. Yet I think Geoffrey has told me you mean to study at Girton?"

"To fit myself for my future work—yes. The Spanish school-boards are just as conservative as English ones. A young woman armed with Cambridge certificates would have more chance of coming to the front than another, equally strong-minded, who should rely on her own merits."

"Strong-minded!" Dinah ejaculated with horror. "At your age, with all the sweet happiness of life still to come, you talk, as though you approved such things, of being strong-minded?"

Marjorie swept off the heats from a cluster of wayside camomile flowers with the stick of her sunshade. An expression of will which yet was neither unlovely nor unfeminine glowed upon her girlish face.

"Let us understand each other better, Mrs. Arbuthnot. It may well be that our notions of 'sweet happiness' are not the same."

Dinah looked uneasy, and kept silent.

"Power—I will make a confession to you such as I never made before—power is my ideal of happiness. I want to rule, we will hope for good; in any case, to rule, to be needed on all sides, sought after, distinguished—to see my name in print! That is the truth, no matter how. I may wrap truth up in fine-sounding words," said Marjorie Bartrand. "That is the secret of my enthusiasm for humanity, and of my personal ambition. To lead others, to *command*, is my ideal of happiness."

"And mine," exclaimed Gaston Arbuthnot's wife, unhesitatingly, "is—to obey. For a woman to look up to another stronger life, to be ruled by a stronger will, gladly to take all little household worries on herself—I speak badly, Miss Bartrand, but you guess my meaning—and feel more than paid by one kind look or word in return, to know that as much as she wants of the world is safe between four lowly walls, to have her hours filled with the care of others, to keep her parlor bright and cheerful, to hear the voices of the children—"

Dinah's own voice broke; and Marjorie, who had watched her with looks of lofty compassion, softened involuntarily.

"So far from speaking badly, Mrs. Arbuthnot, you speak with very pretty eloquence. You draw a picture of constant giving up, which, if one could believe it to be from life, would, I confess, be attractive. It *is* drawn from life, perhaps?"

"Oh—no; I said, only, that would be my ideal of happiness," faltered Dinah, with a pang.

"Fancied or real, such an existence would never do for me. I have not much taste for obedience. I have none at all for household worries. Babies I bar."

"Miss Bartrand!"

"Yes, I do. Grandpapa and I visit about in our Pagan way among the Guernesey country people, and I know that I absolutely bar babies of every shade and degree. I am not sure I would go so far as to *injure* one," said Marjorie, stealing a glance at her companion's shocked face; "but I feel that they are safest kept out of my sight. I tell the mothers so."

"You are too young to know what you feel, Miss Bartrand." There was a standstill of some moments ere Dinah recovered herself enough to speak. "Long before you are my age you'll begin to see things differently. Young girls are a bit hard, I've sometimes thought, in all classes of life, until the time comes."

"What time, may I ask?"

"The time for having a sweetheart, and getting married," said Dinah Arbuthnot.

From any other lips Marjorie would have regarded such a suggestion as an indignity. Dinah was so true a woman, had a soul so whitely delicate, that the speech carried with it no possible suspicion of offense. It was homely common sense, kindly and simply uttered.

"What you say might be true of most girls of my age. If I am hard, it is not because of my youth, or my inexperience. I have

had"—Marjorie's face flamed to the hue of the poppies in the corn—"what the world is pleased to call a sweetheart. But for the interposition of Providence (I remember that interposition, night and morning, on my knees) I should be married now."

"Unless he loved you above everything, you are best as you are, Miss Bartrand. In marriage it is all or nothing. I mean—I mean," Dinah hesitated, "no wife could be happy with half a heart bestowed on her."

"Half! What do you say to a quafter, a fraction?" exclaimed Marjorie, hotly. "What do you say to a creature stuffed as the dolls are, with sawdust, in lieu of a human heart at all? A creature well set up as regards shoulders, six feet in measurement, with fine white teeth, blue eyes, yellow mustache, a swagger and a sword? His would scarcely be the larger soul, Mrs. Arbuthnot, the stronger will which it should be a woman's crown of honor to obey!"

Down went another head of clustering camomile, felled by a well-aimed stroke from Marjorie's hand. Her eyes flashed fire.

"And yet a wayward girl, scarcely past sixteen, and with no mother to give her counsel, might for two or three weeks, you know, be hurried into thinking such a man a hero. I was that girl, Mrs. Arbuthnot. Vanity blinded me, or the love of power, or something stronger than either. At all events, when Major Tredennis asked me, one fine morning, to be engaged to him, I said 'Yes.'"

"And the Seigneur of Tintajeux?" asked Dinah, looking round at the dimpled, indignant face of seventeen.

"Major Tredennis comes of a race of gentlemen," said grand-papa. "'If Major Tredennis can make adequate settlements, and my granddaughter elects to spend her life with a popinjay, she may do so.'"

"And, with no better advice than that, you were engaged?"

"I was engaged. Major Tredennis used to write me foolish notes. He gave me a ring I never wore. He gave me chocolate creams, and a setter puppy. He sung French songs to me, in an English accent. Looking back at it all now, I think the chocolate creams were the best part of that bad time, except, of course, the setter, *whom I loved*. When it was all broken off—for the owner of the white teeth and the sword was a right wicked craven, and should have married a girl in England who cared for him, without once looking at me;—when it was all broken off, and I had to send Jock back, I did weep scalding tears, at parting from him. The

only tears I have ever shed, or shall shed, in connection with love-matters."

"Wait!" was Dinah Arbuthnot's answer. "If I see you, as I hope to do, two or three years hence, it may be you will tell a different story."

Marjorie glanced at the yachting party, sauntering contentedly, a hundred yards or so in front, among the lights and shadows of the orchard-bordered road. There was Lord Rex, outrageously devoted in manner to Rosie Verschoyle, with whom he loitered apart. And there, a little divided, also, from the rest, was Giff Arbuthnot, well entertained, one must surmise, by the shallow talk, fascinated by the pink-and-white charms of Ada, the most soulless and the prettiest of the De Carteret family.

"If such a revolution takes place, a dozen years hence, that I marry," she observed, after consideration, "the husband I choose shall be a head-and-shoulders taller than myself, morally. No singer of ballad sentiment, no popinjay, with yellow mustache, and a sword, and uniform next time. If I take to myself a master, he shall be a man—with a temper, a will, a purpose in life, all nobler than my own."

Such a husband as Geoffrey would be! The thought obeyed the wish in Dinah's heart.

"And I must be first—first in his affection. I would have no rivals, past or present. If Bayard, himself, walked the earth and wished to marry me, Marjorie Bartrand, I would ask him if I was first. Yes, Mrs. Arbuthnot, I would ask Chevalier Bayard, himself, if he had looked at any other woman before he loved me; and if he had, and though my heart broke for it, I would refuse him."

A red light broke on Marjorie's cheeks, her eyes dilated. The likeness to old Andros, which came out in every moment of strong emotion, was never more marked than now.

"If we ask too much we may lose all," said Dinah, not perhaps without a pang of dread as visions of Geoffrey's youth rose before her. "I never heard anything about this gentleman."

"Chevalier Bayard? the first gentleman the world has known!"

"But if he was put upon his word, yes, and though he stood with his bride before the altar, I think Chevalier Bayard might have to confess to some foolish fancy in the past."

"I spoke of love, not of foolishness," exclaimed Marjorie Bartrand. Then, as though quickly repenting of her warmth: "We have talked more than enough," she cried, "about a peradventure"

that will never become fact. Let us forget, with all speed, that so much nonsense has been spoken.

But the conversation was one which neither of these young women could, by any means, forget while she lived.

CHAPTER XXIV.

REX BASIRE'S HUMOR.

A ROUGH paved village square; green-shuttered houses, sweltering in the afternoon sun; a pair of open-work spires, delicate as lace, dazzlingly white as Caen stone could make them, silhouetted against the burning sky; tattered children, with mercenary hands full of wild flowers; a knot of British pilgrims, irreverently loquacious outside the church's western door; grewsome beggars making exhibition of wounds; honest peasant people; dishonest relic sellers—such were the salient features of La Delivrande at the moment when Marjorie and Dinah descended into its closer air out of the field-smelling, wind-blown road that brought them hither from the coast.

"We will ask Mrs. Arbuthnot's opinion, and abide by it," cried Lord Rex, coming forward a few paces to meet them. "She will be far better versed in this kind of thing than the rest of us. Ought we to carry candles in our hands, Mrs. Arbuthnot, when we seek our curé? There is a candle-stall conveniently opposite, and Miss Verschoyle and I will head the procession as penitents-in-chief."

"Please help to keep Lord Rex in order, Mrs. Arbuthnot. He is really doing and saying the absurdest things!" Rosie Verschoyle must have been, surely, at the zenith of good temper when she thus addressed that poor Mrs. Arbuthnot! "Now, Lord Rex, I command you to drop this talk about candles instantly. Of course the whole business is a ridiculous piece of Popish superstition, still," observed Rosie, with a certain largeness, "one has one's ideas. A church is a church. Positively, I will not speak another word to you to-day unless you behave yourself with decorum when we are inside."

The awfulness of the threat appeared, for the moment, to check Lord Rex Basire's playful spirits. He made no purchase of candles. Save that he affected a sudden and very marked lameness of gait, he behaved no worse than his companions on entering the church. Guided by ragged Jean Jacques the English people

walked up to a fretted stone screen dividing the choir from the nave. In a small side altar on the left was a doll, clothed in woven gold, unlovely of face, with eyes "dreadfully staring," with a crown of paper lilies, with a score of rushlights burning before her in a row—La Delivrande.

Who that has traveled in primitive French districts can fail of knowing these little miracle chapels, their atmosphere, their votive offerings, their sincerity, their tinsel, their pathos? At least a hundred graven memorials on the wall beside the Virgin told the story of simple human hearts that had suffered, believed; of anguished human hopes that had here found fulfillment. Dinah Arbutnot's cheeks paled as Marjorie, in a whisper, translated the meaning of the inscriptions. Here a mother recorded her gratitude for her child, a wife for her husband, a daughter for her parent. Here the names were graven in full, here in initials. Occasionally there was one word only, "*Reconnaissance*" and a date. Dinah's cheeks paled, her eyes filled. If she were alone, Dinah felt—puritan, heretic, though she were—she would gladly kneel and make her confession, lay bare her sorrow on the spot where so many stricken and weary human souls had cast away the sad garment of repression before her!

Lord Rex Basire's view of the place and situation continued irresistibly comic. And the faces of his companions, the rose-pink face of Miss Verschyle, not expected, failed to condemn him for his levity.

A heap of pious gifts, testimonials, in kind, from the cured, lay, incongruously, as they had been offered, before the altar of the Virgin. There were crutches, big and small, a child's reclining-carriage, models of ships innumerable, a wooden leg—the stoutest faith might long for an explanation of that wooden leg! Well, reader, with the fair church solemn and hushed, five or six black-clad women telling their heads before the different altars, its only Catholic inmates, Lord Rex, it must be concluded, found the temptation toward practical jocularities too strong for him. Hobbling up to the altar, this humorous little lord stood, with bowed head, with contrite manner, in front of the lily-crowned figure for some minutes' space. Slowly ascending a step, he next deposited his crutch, a silver and ebony toy, upon the heap of worn and dusty peasant offerings; then walked away with tripping, resonant step, with head joyfully erect, down the western aisle, as who should say, "Behold me—a believer, cured."

Ragged Jean Jacques held his mouth between two sun-blackened

hands, showily pantomiming his appreciation of the Englishman's costly waggishness. The subalterns of the Maltshire Royals tittered aloud. Alas! in a marching regiment, as elsewhere, has not human nature its weaker side? Is not a duke's son, with two inches of brain, and wit in proportion, a duke's son, even when he jests? The young ladies with one exception looked about as frigid as Italian snow looks under the kisses of an April sun. The exception was Marjorie Bartrand.

Away out of the church flew Marjorie, brushing against Rex Basire's elbow in her exit. She waited in the porch outside, eager beggars pressing forward with their wounds, children with their half-dead wild flowers, relic-mongers with their chaplets and rosaries—blest, ay, to the last bead, blest, "tout bonnement," by His Holiness, away in Rome. By and by, when the last of the loud-talking merry-spirited knot of idlers had issued forth from the church, Marjorie fastened upon the offender-in-chief. With luminous eyes, with drawn breath, with hands tightly clinched in her hot indignation, she scathed him thus:

"You have played a delicate bit of comedy, have you not, Lord Rex? It was the finest stroke of humor to scandalize a few poor peasant women, saying prayers for their dead? For me," looking one by one round the group, "I felt ashamed—more ashamed than ever I was in my life before—of belonging to the same nation as you all! I read once," said Marjorie, "in a wise book: 'Where we are ignorant, let us show reverence.' The ignorance, only, has been shown to-day."

Dinah Arbuthnot and Geoffrey, who had lingered behind the others in the church, arrived on the scene just in time to hear the last accents of this denunciation. Then, ere the culprits could utter a word in self-defense, away shot Marjorie's arrowy figure along a shadowed by-street, away, neither stopping nor hesitating, along the old chaussée, that leads from La Delivrande Parisward, in an exactly opposite direction to the Langrune road.

"By Jupiter! I was never so frightened in my life." Rex Basire's limbs collapsed under him in well-dramatized alarm. "Have all Girton girls got dynamite in their eyes? Does their speech invariably bristle with torpedoes? Is Marjorie Bartrand Protestant, or Catholic, or what?"

"Ah," repeated Rosie Verschoyle, ever ready with a little amiable platitude. "A hundred years ago the Bartrands were Papists, remember. It is a moot question among the people who know them best what the Tintajoux religion is at the present day."

"I know one thing," cried Geoffrey's friend, Ada de Carteret. "All through Tintajeux parish the seigneur is looked upon as more learned than canny. When the country folk come near old Andros after dark, declaiming Greek, and with a couple of black dogs at his heels, they will run a mile round sooner than meet him."

"The seigneur's term of endearment for Marjorie is witch, when they happen to be on speaking terms at all," said another voice. "Poor girl! In spite of her temper one can not help liking her extremely. Who was it said of Marjorie that she had such an olive-like flavor?"

"You always feel there must be a fund of goodness in the dear child—somewhere." This finishing note was given in Miss Verschoyie's thin voice. "As to the lecture you came in for, Lord Rex, you deserved it richly. It is quite too—in saying this, I mean it—quite! to laugh at other people's beliefs, even when they are most ridiculous."

And then they all sauntered off to the stalls, where Lord Rex, we may be sure, found ample scope for his veiled yet poignant irony among the crosses, medals, rosaries, and relics that had been blessed, "tout bonnement," away in Rome, by His Holiness.

Marjorie, meanwhile, pursued her way through shadow and sunshine, unconscious in which direction the fiery haste of her steps was bearing her. When her temper had burned out—in the space, say, of two minutes and a half—she perceived that she was once more in open country, alone among colza stacks and fields of ripening barley, but on a less frequented road, amidst a landscape with wider horizons than the road and landscape she and Dinah had traversed in coming to Langrune from the sea.

How good it was to breathe this wild, well-oxygenized air! With what glad senses Marjorie gazed about her across the plains, rippling, as the sun lowered, in lucent amber waves, and shaded deliciously at intervals by rows of pearly, smoke-coloured poplar! A family of peasant farmers drove by in one of their old-world Norman harvest wagons—coeval, perhaps, with Andros Bertrand's sickle! Friendly nods, gleaming smiles from sunburned faces, were bestowed on the little girl as the homely cart-load jolted on. She watched with wistful eyes until the wagon lessened, was lost to sight in the long perspective of white road. Seating herself beside a ditch under shadow of a solitary pollard willow, a sudden vision of vines and olives and Spanish sierras arose, with all the strength of inherited nostalgia, in Marjorie's breast. If the harvesters would only have carried her a league or two onward with

them! She had nothing of value in her possession but a watch. How many francs could one raise upon a watch, Marjorie Bartrand wondered, in some primitive, unsuspecting Norman town? Enough, surely, living among peasant people, and eking means out by an occasional day's work at onion-weeding or colza-stacking, to carry one down to the frontier, the cherished land of dreams. A letter could be sent to relieve the seigneur's mind, and—

And then, glancing back along the chaussée Marjorie saw a man's figure advancing toward her with steady quickness; a figure she knew overwell, darkly outlined against the chrome yellow of the sky. So Ada de Carteret was forsaken. Her heart went pit-a-pat. She would have given a fortune to fly, yet stirred not! One minute later and her nostalgia was cured. Longings for vine and olive and Spanish sierra had vanished, all, before the unromantic English presence of Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

CHAPTER XXV.

YOU—AND I

"You have found out a right pleasant spot," Geoff settled himself coolly into repose among the long wayside grasses that clothed the opposite or field side of the ditch. "Our friends, when they have bought themselves each a cross and medal, are going down to watch the Parisians return from fishing. You and I will have the best of it among the barley here."

"You—and I!"

"You—and I Does the expression displease you, Miss Bartrand?"

"If you have any intention of remaining you had better take out your pipe at once, Mr. Arbuthnot."

"Why?"

"Because an idle man, his feet dangling over a ditch, and not smoking, would be a spectacle too wretched to contemplate."

"The description may be worse than the fact. I am idle. My feet dangle over a ditch. I am not smoking. I was never less wretched in my life."

"I spoke of such a person as an object of painful contemplation."

"Is the spectacle painful to you at this moment? Speak frankly."

"I—I only wished to let you know that you might smoke, if you chose."

"Thanks. I would rather do nothing to alter my present state of feeling."

And then they came to a full stop; a rather marked one.

Marjorie spoke first. "The charm of a spot like this"—she brought out each word with incision—"is its solitude."

"*Solitude à deux*. The French have such an expression, have they not?"

Geoff Arbuthnot asked the question, pronouncing his *eu* vilely.

"'Solitude a-doo!' I am hopelessly stupid," said Marjorie, holding her head aloft. "'A-doo!' Is it meant for a farewell, or what? I really do not see the drift of the idiom—a quotation, perhaps, from one of the classic authors?"

Geoffrey was sensible that she had never been more dangerous than at this juncture, mutinous pride struggling with merriment on her clear girlish face, as she turned his terrible French accent into ridicule. He was sensible, also, of a new, an unexpected pleasure in being laughed at by her.

"Were you enjoying your solitude (without the 'deu') truly, and thoroughly, when I disturbed you?"

"Thoroughly, no. I had not got the flavor of folly enough out of my mouth for that. You relished, I hope, the exquisite wit we English people showed in the church, Mr. Arbuthnot? You appreciated the fun of wounding simple people's beliefs by depositing our Oxford Street finery among the real piteous crutches before La Delivrande? And to think that young women," exclaimed Marjorie, waxing warm, "are stigmatized, in masses, as frivolous! How can they be anything *but* frivolous, with such examples before them?"

"Let us cast up both columns of the account. Would a man—no, as we are talking of Lord Rex Basire, let us say would a foolish youth—display his foolishness among a bevy of pretty girls, unless they were ready to give him smiles as an encouragement?"

"I am sure Mrs. Arbuthnot would not be among the smilers. Her beautiful face looked so good and calm, when the rest of us stood giggling there before the altar."

"My cousin is serious, a little overserious always." Geoffrey Arbuthnot gazed attentively at the horizon as he made this remark.

"It would do your cousin a vast deal of good to run away from that feather-weight husband of hers. Look shocked, if you choose; I am in earnest. I consider," said Marjorie, displaying her world-

ly wisdom with gravity, "that Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot's character is thoroughly spoiled. He is a charming fellow, doubtless. Still, everybody need not remind him of his charm to his face."

"And you believe in retributive morality? You think the curative treatment for a charming fellow is—that his wife should run away from him?"

"My experience of charming fellows would incline me toward heroic treatment. As he walked up from Langrune I asked Mrs. Arbuthnot to start with me on foot for Spain. With twenty francs in our pocket, I told her, and doing a day's work on the road whenever our resources ran low, we might get down safe to the frontier in time. But Mrs. Arbuthnot did not seem to see it."

"Dinah's is not an adventurous spirit. If you would accept a substitute, Miss Bartrand, perhaps I—"

"Go on, pray."

"Might be allowed to follow, with a thick stick, at a distance."

"Keep your stick for England! I would not be afraid on the loneliest road between this and Barcelona."

"Without the stick, then—shall we start?"

Marjorie shifted her posture a little. She became suddenly interested in a plant of marsh-mallow at her side.

"When next I enter Spain, Mr. Arbuthnot, it shall be with dignity. When I meet my mother's people I hope to be armed with degrees, certificates—whatever the English universities will confer on me."

"Don't go until your name has been bracketed high on the list of wranglers."

As Geoffrey made this venture on thin ice he watched his pupil narrowly. One of the storm-flashes that lit Marjorie Bartrand's face into such frequent, such perilous beauty, was his reward.

"You mean—never go at all! Do you feel a pleasure, Mr. Arbuthnot, in throwing cold water over my dearest hopes and ambitions?"

"An enormous pleasure, Miss Bartrand. I have felt it from that first evening when you were good enough to hire me as your teacher at Tintajoux."

The girl looked away from him, her color changing.

"That evening, when I had to receive you in state, to make formal speeches and courtesies, all my great-aunts and uncles looking on through their Bartrand eyelids! Do you remember our Bon Espoir? He was an omen of better temper, perhaps, than has pre-

valled between us since. Were you taken aback? Was I quite unlike what you expected?"

She asked these momentous questions with the keen curiosity characteristic of the passion in its earlier days. But all the time she shrunk from encountering Geff Arbuthnot's glance.

"You really desire to know?"

"Yes."

"I will tell you, on one condition. What was your wish when you courtesied under the cedars to the new moon?"

"My wish?" turning further and further away from him.

"Why, folly unrepeatable—the sort of nonsense my nurses taught me to say when I was little. Your memory is inconveniently good."

"Accurate to the smallest detail! How clearly one can see the meeting of those four water-lanes, and the flowers you gave me, as I know, now, alas! for Mrs. Arbuthnot, and the ribbon you tied them with—the ribbon," said Geff coolly, "which you will some day send me back for a book-marker! Yes, the fairest summer evening of my life was the one when I first saw Tintajoux Manoir—and you."

And he believed his own words. Sure sign that the heart within him was sound—healthiest life at its core. Guessing at the confessions of that ingenuous maidenly face as Marjorie, half blushes, half willfulness, persistently gave him her profile, Geoffrey Arbuthnot had clean forgotten Lesser Cheriton, ay, and a drama played out there in which he took a not unimportant part.

"I think this Norman evening is to the full as fair," said Marjorie. "There are bigger sweeps of cutline, there is more quality in the air than falls to our lot in the Channel Islands."

Then, again, there came a pause, broken softly by the occasional hum of an insect on the wing, by the swaying of stalks, the whispers of the ripe and restless grain, by the chirp of the hedge crickets, by the solitary treble of a lark lost somewhere, pouring its heart out in the sea-blue vault above.

Marjorie could not be silent long.

"To begin at the beginning, what did you think of me when you got my first note—the two lines I sent in answer to yours? Nothing very good, or you would not be so reluctant to tell it."

"I thought," said Geff, "that you required my services as a coach, that there was a little affectation about your Greek 'e's,' and that your name was Marjorie D. Bartrand."

"That terrible signature of mine—the one bearable name I pos-

ness reduced to a D! You know, Mr. Arbuthnot, I hope, what D. stands for?"

"Dorcas?" suggested Geoffrey, "or perhaps Deborah? We have a number of fine old Hebrew names beginning with D."

"But I am not a fine old Hebrew. I am a Spanish woman, heart and soul, and I bear my mother's name, Dolores. Grandpapa and I met an American in Paris, when I was younger, who used to call me 'Miss Dollars.' The thought of that pronunciation always makes me shy of bringing my beautiful Spanish name to the fore."

"Dollars is more beautiful than Dolores." Saying this, Geoffrey took studious care to imitate her accent. "Dollars is at least suggestive of human activity, of the market-place, not the grave-yard. Why should a child, with all the good chances of life open, have such a name as Grief imposed upon her by worldly-wise godfathers and godmothers?"

"I speak of Dolores, not Grief, and—and you have no poetry in you, Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot! You don't know all that a word says to us southern people. Think of plain Marjorie Bartrand—nothing but 'ar, ar!' If I could only change Bartrand for a name with no 'ar' in it, I—"

The supposition was rushing forth with velocity. Then, in a trice, Marjorie stopped. She colored to the roots of her hair. And then she and Geoffrey laughed so loud that the stilly air rang with their laughter. If these two young people did not actually tread the primrose path, they were within a stone's-throw of it, ignorant though both might be of the route which lay so near them.

"That 'ar' is the worst of all your cruelties," said Geff, presently. "To show my greatness of mind I will return evil for good. I will tell you what you wish to know. As I walked out for the first time to Tintajoux, I had you constantly before my mind's eye, Miss Bartrand. I saw you, with the vision of the spirit, every inch an heiress."

"Every inch an heiress!" repeated Marjorie, abashed.

"With rigid manners, hair drawn back, Chinese fashion, and overwhelming dignity. Whenever people are of more than common volume—I fancy that is the euphemistic term, is it not?—dignity!"

"And you found me—a scarecrow." She measured, mentally, and with self-abasement, the leanness of her untidged figure. "What did you think when a lank country child, in a cotton gown, and without either dignity or manner, appeared before you?"

"I felt it was my duty to accept facts as they came. I sum-

moned up courage, and mastered my disappointment with tolerable ease," said Geoffrey Arbuthot.

His face supplied a postscript to the admission which caused Marjorie's heart to beat faster. "We must not stop here all day!" she cried, springing promptly to her feet. "Although, if one had something to eat, it might be pleasant to do so. Yonder, to the left, is Courseulles spire. We saw it—no, you were hemmed in by sunshades—I saw it from the steamer. If we take this footpath through the cornfields, we might visit Courseulles and make a small turn round the country before going back to our company and our dinner at Langrune."

But Geoffrey did not move.

"I will have my bond," he uttered with tragic emphasis. "I will never stir from this spot until you tell me what your wish was when you courtesied to the moon."

"I would rather not say. You have the right to insist, of course—it was a bargain. But, please let me off. Why should I repeat such puerility here, in the wise and sober light of day?"

"I will have my bond," repeated Geoffrey Arbuthot tenaciously. "I have made my confession in full. Now, do you make yours. What was your wish?"

A flood of shame by this time suffused Marjorie's cheeks. But Geoffrey was stubborn. He exacted his pound of flesh to the uttermost.

"I courtesied, as the children do, thrice—and each time, while you were talking solemnly to grandpapa, I said, quite in a whisper—"

"Don't mind punctuation, Miss Bartrand. It will be the sooner over."

"I like my coach—may my coach like me!" cried Marjorie, nearly in tears, but giving to the refrain the true sing-song of the nursery. "Remember, sir, when I was so inane I had only known you two hours, and—and I believed you to be the other Mr. Arbuthot."

Geoffrey slipped down to his feet. As Marjorie was standing on the bank, it thus happened that their faces were on a level, and very near each other. Geoffrey observed, more closely than he had done before, the texture of her skin—delicate in spite of sunburn, as perfect health and Guernsey air could render it. He looked into the depths of her gray eyes, even in their quietest expression touched with fire. He admitted the character, so superior to all mere prettiness, of her serious large mouth.

"The wish has come true," he whispered, in a tone never to be

forgotten by Marjorie Bartrand, "although I have the misfortune of being myself, not Gaston. Let me help you."

He held out his hands, but Marjorie, with her agile young strength, had cleared the ditch almost before his assistance was proffered. They paused a moment or two irresolute, they discussed a little as to latitude and longitude, and then away the two started, in the direction of Ocourseulles, across the corn-fields.

A third figure, dove-winged, golden-quivered, walked with them, although they might not discern his presence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CUT AND THRUST.

NEVER was a man surer of tumbling into little unlooked-for sociabilities than Gaston Arbuthnot. Had he been shipwrecked on a South Sea island I believe Gaston would have chanced upon an acquaintance there, some vanished shade from London club or Paris café would have seized him by the button-hole before the day was out!

He was button-holed in Langrune-sur-Mer. When the pilgrimage returned from La Delivrande, Linda and her Robbie were found seated with Mrs. Verschoyle on a trio of hired chairs before the hotel, taking their pleasure rather mournfully. Cassandra Tighe, her scarlet cloak conspicuous from afar, was dredging—happy Cassandra—among such rocks as the tide still left uncovered.

Gaston Arbuthnot was invisible.

"A real case of forcible abduction," cried Linda Thorne, addressing herself to Dinah. "You are not a foolishly nervous wife, I am sure, Mrs. Arbuthnot? You could philosophically listen to a story of how two pretty French girls carried away an English artist against his will?"

Dinah assented with one of her rare smiles. The knowledge that Gaston was finding amusement otherwise than in the half-clever talk, the too ready, too flattering sympathy of Linda herself, cast retrospective brightness upon the afternoon that his absence had clouded.

From jealousy of a selfish or little kind Dinah's heart had never bled. Earlier in their married life, when Gaston still affected dancing, and as a matter of course went to balls without his wife, it was her usual next morning's pleasure to scan his programmes,

enjoy his sketches of his partners, his repetitions of their small-talk—all without a shade of hurt feeling. Once or twice she hinted that she would fain accompany him as a looker-on. "Nobody looks on long in this wicked world," was Gaston's answer. "You do not dance, you do not play whist. You have a brain under your yellow locks and you are too young to talk scandal. Ball-room atmosphere is unwholesome. I would not hear of such a sacrifice." And as it was not Dinah's habit to pose as martyr, she obeyed, trusting in him always.

Beautiful, pure of soul, herself, she simply honored the beauty, believed in the purity of soul of other women. Gaston was popular, spoiled; an artist with an artist's—more than this, with an American's temperament. A degree of youthful immaturity seemed ever to lurk amidst his astute knowledge of life and of men. He had but a half-share, as he would tell her, of the fibers derived from long lines of tired ancestors. He sought diversion for diversion's sake. She had made no quarrel with the inexorable facts of her husband's existence or of her own. If only she had been his equal, intellectually! If she could have supplied him with the mental companionship he needed, or interested him in his childless fireside! Ah, could she thus have risen to his level, Gaston's heart had been in her keeping still. Hence came the morbid unrest of her present life; hence the dread, increasing daily, hourly, strive with it as she might, of Linda's influence.

"I am afraid one gets used to most things, Mrs. Thorne. I have seen Gaston run away with so often, that I am not much moved by the thought of these pretty French girls."

Linda Thorne rose. She rested her hand confidentially within Dinah's arm, much to Dinah's chagrin, and proposed that they should walk together along the sands to look for Mr. Artuthnot.

"Yes, I must positively tell you the whole story. Your husband had finished his sketch of the lovely fisher-girl. The young person was not at all lovely, in fact. But she was striking. She had distinct genre. Artists care for genre, you know, much more than for beauty."

Dinah resolved to question Gaston as to the truth of this. She resolved to cultivate distinct genre in herself for the remainder of her days.

"Striking—that word sums up all. The big cobalt-blue eyes, that say about as much, in reality, as a china tea-saucer, and are supposed by imaginative men to say everything—blonde hair worn in a pigtail, palpably not original, to her heels; complexion care-

fully toned to a shade one point short of freckles; bare arms, akimbo—excellently shaped arms, of course; a native prawn basket, and a fishing-dress from Worth's. I got to know the type so well," said Linda, "in my governess days, during one summer, especially, when the Benjamin sent me to Houlgate with her children."

Dinah, who, as we have seen, had no genius for supplying the hooks and eyes of conversation, remained chillingly silent.

"Your husband had finished his sketch of her—an admirably idealized one. I have it here." And Dinah, for the first time, perceived that Mrs. Thorne held possession of Gaston's sketch-book. "Let us look at it together!" impulsively, "or are you—no doubt you are—blasé about sketches? Well, well, it may be natural. Married to an artist, if one has no real, strong, natural talent for art—"

"I have no real, strong, natural talent for anything," interrupted poor Dinah, petulantly.

"Oh—naughty! You must not say such things. I will not allow you to be modest. Mr. Arbuthnot tells me your needle-work is"—Linda looked about her as though an encomium were hard to find—"most elaborate! In these days needle-work ranks among the fine arts. Of course you are wild about this exquisite new stitch from Vienna?"

"I have not seen it. The only wool-work I do is old-fashioned cross-stitch."

"Just fancy! And Mr. Arbuthnot, I am convinced, spends his time—half his time—in designing quite lovely patterns for you?"

Dinah's breast swelled at a vision of the Rosciff wild roses overcame her. She made no attempt at a parry.

"If I had married an artist I would never have gone to the shops for patterns. Or rather, if I had married an artist, I would never have embroidered at all. I should have thrown myself into his ambitions, his work—have spent my life so utterly at his side."

Dinah stooped to pick up a little pink shell from the strand, by this action freeing herself from Linda Thorne. She put the shell inside her glove, thinking she would keep it as a memento of Langrune and of this summer day that had passed so nearly without a cloud. So nearly—but the summer day was not over yet!

"All this time I am not accounting to you for your husband's disappearance, am I? My dear creature, it was really the drollest thing! Robbie had not as yet floated up with the tide, and Mrs. Verschoyle and I, your husband with us, had made our slippery

way across the rocks to mainland. Well, just as Gast—, I mean, as Mr. Arbuthnot was putting a last touch to his sketch, up ran a little Frenchman, full dress, a rose and white daughter in each hand, and an enormously stout wife, with a bouquet, following. He threw his arms round your husband's neck, and but for Mr. Arbuthnot's presence of mind would certainly have kissed him."

"Kissed!"

"Of course. Have you never lived among French people? It was some old artist companion of Gast—, of your husband's bachelor life. You can imagine the recollections of former joyous days spent in Paris as students together, the inquiries for mutual friends, now dead or married, the history each had to give of his marriage and present happiness!"

"I can not. I am not imaginative."

It must be confessed that a tinge of displeasure was audible in Dinah's voice. Every syllable of Mrs. Thorne's unpremeditated chatter had wounded her like a stiletto prick.

"Ah—and I am imaginative to my finger tips. We seem the very antithesis of each other, in character, as we are in looks." Linda had really a very graceful way of admitting her own plainness, when occasion offered. "I can assure you I filled up a dozen little blanks in our Benedicts' exchange of confidences. I traced out a full and rounded whole most satisfactorily. People may slur over half a dozen years in as many words. If nature has endowed you with imagination, you read between the lines. The barest outline suggests the finished picture."

Something in her tone would seem to imply that Gaston Arbuthnot's married life had been a spoiled life, or so it seemed to Dinah's irritated heart. Dinah felt that the half dozen words must have yielded latent hints of her own intellectual shortcomings, hints which Linda Thorne's talent for filling up blanks had developed into certainty.

"The next part of the ceremony was the introduction to Madame de Camore and the children—two small Parisian coquettes, about the age of my Rahnee, who fell in love with Mr. Arbuthnot on the spot."

"Little children fall in love with Gaston, always," said Dinah, hastily.

"The family party was taking its departure, it seemed, under the broiling sun, to a children's ball at Luc Casino. At a word from papa the small imps seized a hand each of Gas—, of Mr. Arbuthnot, and dragged him away *volens volens*. All children are

tyrants," generalized Linda, with a dismal yawn, occasioned probably by the recollection of her virtuously spent afternoon, "but these terrible French children are the worst of all. Perhaps it is in imitation of the Americans. I consider the way American infants are brought forward in public places is a disgrace to the century."

"You think children without exception should be kept in their nurseries?"

Dinah called to mind a group of four that passed her window on their road to the rose-show. She remembered a small figure dancing with exultation on rainbow-hued flounces.

"My dear soul! Fancy putting such a question to me, a mother! Of course I make no exception of my own daughter. She is a good, quiet little monkey," added Linda; "although Mr. Arbuthnot is positively spoiling her, fast—I hope I impose her on no one. Children, as a rule, I look upon from the governess point of view. You know how my bread was earned when I was young?"

"Mr. Arbuthnot has told me that he first met you in Paris."

"Yes, in the domestic service of Madam Moïse Benjamin. I got twenty pounds a year and my washing. I had to sleep under the roof, to play dance music, to remodel madame's dresses, to teach English to the three girl Benjamins, and a boy—ah, that boy!" said Linda, between her teeth. "If you think me like Becky Sharpe—confess now, you *do* think me like Becky Sharpe?"

"I do not, indeed." Dinah's manner grew colder and colder. "I never heard of Becky Sharpe before."

"Well, if you had," said Linda, in high good humor, and storing up all the little scene against future dramatization—"if you had heard of Becky Sharpe, and had thought me like her, where would be the wonder? I was brought up just as Becky was, to live by my wits. My mamma—I connect her hazily with sofa cushions, much white embroidery, an Italian greyhound, doctors, and the smell of ether—my mamma died when I was four years old. She lies in Brussels cemetery," ran on Linda, drawing a hasty outline of a tombstone on the sand, "with Lady Constantia Smythe, and more than one side allusion to the peerage graven above her head. At the time she died we had not very definite daily bread. Still, my grandfather was an earl, and poor papa found one of his few consolations in making much of our nobility."

Frankness, it would seem, was Linda Thorne's strong point, but Dinah was unmoved by it. The earldom dazzled Gaston Arbuth-

not's lowly-born wife no more than Linda's personal confidences propitiated her. Dinah had a child's instinct for friends and for enemies. She liked, she disliked, unerringly, and was too transparently honest to mask her feelings.

Stooping down, she picked up another shell from the sea's smooth edge. She sought once more to widen the space between herself and her companion. Linda Thorne's quick brain observed the movement, divined the intention.

"Excellent, stupid, well-meaning, ill-acting young woman. And I have not a reprehensible sentiment at all toward her!" Thoughts like this shot through Linda's mind, Linda, who really had it not in her to know sterner passion than a drawing-room malignity. "With her youth, her goodness, her complexion, her upper lip, to be jealous of poor, plain, cynical, elderly me! She needs a pretty sharp lesson. Children who cry for the moon deserve to get something worth crying for." Then, sweetly, "You seem interested in shells, dear Mrs. Arbuthnot," she observed aloud. "You study conchology as a science, perhaps, under the Platonic auspices of that severe-looking cousin of yours, Geoffrey Arbuthnot of John's."

"I study nothing, unfortunately for myself. I am quite ignorant," said Dinah, lifting her face and meeting her tormentor's eyes full. "I am picking up a shell or two," she added, "to keep as a remembrance of my day in Langrune."

"I should say you would remember Langrune without any tangible memento," remarked Linda. "Rather ungrateful, you know, if you did not."

"How, ungrateful?"

"Well, because the picnic was given unconditionally in honor of you—"

"I do not understand you," interrupted Dinah, with ill-judged warmth. "The party was planned before any one in Guernsey knew of my existence. I was asked accidentally—because I could be of use. Four or five girls had promised these young officers to come, and they wanted a married woman as a chaperon. This was what Lord Rex Basire said when he invited me on Monday."

"And you believed him? You accepted out of pure kindness of *faire tapissierie!* Mrs. Arbuthnot, you are too amiable."

By this time Dinah Arbuthnot's face blazed from brow to chin. Her conscience, oversensitive in the lightest matter, smote her sore. Was not a selfish longing for widened experience—nay, was not a certain distrust of Gaston, a contemptible sense of triumph over Linda—at the bottom of her acquiescence?

"What unusually correct taste Dame Nature displays in her coloring this evening!" Mrs. Thorne gazed with decent vacuity at the sky, and away from Dinah's face. "Soft primrose, fading into pearly green, with just those few vivid touches of deep crimson. It suggests thoughts for a ball-dress. And still, beautiful though the effect is, I would rather not see that sort of shimmer on the water. If we come in for fog-banks somewhere about the Race of Alderney, it will matter little whether the picnic originated for the chaperons, or the chaperons for the picnic! How atrociously hungry this sort of thing makes one! Surely, dinner-time must be drawing nigh."

CHAPTER XXVII.

GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY.

"In two words, you have amused yourself, my dear." Under cover of the friendly twilight, Gaston Arbuthnot pressed his wife's hand as it rested, a little shyly, on his arm. "A good sign for the future. You must enter into the world more, Dinah. You must cultivate this faculty for being amused; I desire nothing better."

Though fog-banks and disaster might lie in ambush about the Race of Alderney, nothing could be tranquilier than the fair summer evening here, on the coast of France.

After an excellent dinner, vraie cuisine Normande, served in the quaint, red-tiled salle of the Hôtel Chateaubriand, the collected yachting party were now progressing along the pleasant sweep of road that leads to Luc. Luc alone, among this group of villages, has a jetty, and off Luc the "Princess" lay moored. Daylight's last flicker was dying from the sky. Already deep fissures of shade intersected the white sand dunes bordering the shore. The sea lay motionless, a vague iridescence far away, northward, the only foreboding of coming change. Cassandra Tighe, a bold spot of color in the gloaming, had exchanged her dredging net for some amphibious structure of green gauze and whalebone. She flitted hither and thither among the bushes that skirted the path, moth-hunting. The younger members of the expedition, in groups of two, loitered slowly along their way, for it was an hour when girlish faces look their fairest, when men's voices are apt to soften, involuntarily!

Dinah Arbuthnot, after a good deal of strategy, had contrived not merely to get possession of her husband, but to hold him,

strongly guarded, and at a safe distance from the rest. Linda Thorne, herself (and Linda had, at will, a longer or a shorter sight than other people), could scarce do more than guess at the outlines of the two figures. The little lover-like fact that this sober couple, this Darby and Joan of four years' standing, walked arm in arm, could be known only to themselves.

"Yes, Gaston, I was amused at sea, for you were there. And I was amused differently by Miss Bartrand. I wish you had been with us at La Delivrande. It was the first time I ever went inside a Popish church," said Dinah, gravely. "And yet, Popish though it was, I could scarce help saying my prayers as we gathered before the altar. The tears came in my eyes as I remembered—I mean as I looked at the heap of offerings, and thought of the sad hearts that had brought their troubles there."

"Was the smell very detestable, a smell one could sketch? Had you beggars? Had the beggars wounds? Of course, votive churches and such things have to be done, in one's youth. I am too old," said Mr. Arbuthnot; "my digestion is too touchy for me to run the risk of physical horrors of my own free will."

"I thought an artist should seek out every kind of experience."

Gaston had so often insisted upon the duty of pursuing inspiration among all sorts and conditions of men—still more of women—that the remark from Dinah's lips had a savor of mischief.

"Every sort of agreeable experience, my dear child. The disgusting is for the great masters. Mine is pocket art, a branch that the critics discreetly label as decadent, although lucrative. Besides," said Gaston, "I have sold my soul to the dealers. And the dealers have sold theirs, if they have any, to a puerility-loving public. An honest manufacturer of paper weights and clock stands needs nothing but prettiness—I won't say beauty—the prettiness of a Parisian, masquerading as a fisher-girl!"

"Or of Parisian children dancing at an afternoon ball. Mrs. Thorne told me about your meeting with some old student acquaintance, and how his daughters led you away captive."

"Small tyrants! I had to dance four dances with each of them, and then be told I was 'un Monsieur très paresseux' for my reward. And so Mrs. Thorne and you are becoming better friends," observed Gaston Arbuthnot, looking hard through the veil of twilight at his wife's reluctant face. "She is a dear good soul, is she not? So bright, so spontaneous! Really, I think that is Mrs. Thorne's crowning charm—her spontaneity."

"I am no friend of hers." Dinah's voice had become cold. "I did not like Mrs. Thorne at first. I dislike her now."

"Impossible, Dinah—impossible. A woman with your face should dislike no created thing."

"I dislike her because her words sting even when they sound softest, because she will never look at me straight. I dislike her," said Dinah, feeling her cheeks burn with shame and indignation, "because she calls you 'Gaston' when she speaks of you."

At this terrible climax Mr. Arbuthnot laughed, so heartily that the quiet undulating sand hills echoed again. Far ahead Mrs. Linda might perhaps have caught the ring of his voice, have marvelled what subject people who had been married four mortal years could find to laugh about.

"This is a black accusation. Happily, whatever her sins in my absence, Mrs. Thorne does not call me 'Gaston' to my face."

Dinah was silent. Gaston's assurances had never carried the same weight with her since Saturday's rose-show, the occasion when she learned of midnight adjournments to Dr. Thorne's house, and of the singing of French songs after a certain mess dinner. Her own conscience was rigid. To suppress a truth was, according to Dinah's code, precisely the same as to utter an untruth. She allowed no margin for her husband's off-hand histories—as a woman of larger mind would possibly have done. She could not see that carelessness, a quick imagination and an intense love of peace, were factors sufficiently strong to account for any little inconsistencies that might now and again creep into Gaston Arbuthnot's domestic confidences.

"Of that I can not judge. I suppose I ought not to care what Mrs. Thorne does or says in *my* absence."

"Of course you ought not. The speech is worthy of your thorough common sense, Dinah."

"But Mrs. Thorne calls you 'Gaston' to me, and I think it a very wicked, unkind thing to do. I think it mean."

"You ought not to think of it at all. Artist people are called by the first name that comes to hand."

"Mrs. Thorne is not an artist."

"She remembers me, in the old days when I knew Camors, as a budding one."

"And she corrects herself with overcare. Having once said 'Gaston' it would be better not to go back to 'Mr. Arbuthnot.'"

"Ah, there, my dear girl, you are too strong. If Linda Thorne

excuses, she accuses herself, although I must confess I don't see the heinousness of her crime. You are becoming a casuist, Dinah."

"Am I? It seems to me that I am remaining what I always was."

"They walked on, after this, mutually taciturn. The interest seemed to have gone from their talk. At last, just as they neared the first lights of Luc village, Dinah's fingers closed with significant tightness on her husband's arm.

"I have an important word to say to you, Gaston. All through our walk I have been wishing to bring it out, but I had not the courage."

"Some one else calls me by my Christian name, perhaps? Or are we only to discuss more enormities of Linda Thorne's?"

There was a threat of impatience in Gaston Arbuthnot's voice. This little running accompaniment of domesticity gave a quite new character, he decided, to picnics, viewed as a means of social pleasure.

"I was not thinking of Linda Thorne. I wanted to ask, Gaston, forgive me—if you would keep nearer to me till we get back to Guernsey?"

"Nearer! Will not everybody be near everybody else on board the steamer? Don't, I beg, ask me to do anything absurd," he added, with emphasis. "You have no idea how ready one's best friends are to laugh at one under given circumstances."

"But if you were just to stop at my side on board—I mean, so that no one else could come near me."

"I will do nothing of the kind. You have no perception of the ridiculous, Dinah. It is a want in your nature. A woman with the slightest sense of humor would never wish her husband to be demonstrative before an audience."

"Demonstrative?"

"Jealous might be nearer the mark. A variety of reasons could be given as to the miserable wretch's motives in such a position. Jealous—of little Rex Basire, probably!"

Gaston Arbuthnot laughed. This time his laughter had no very hearty sound.

"You must learn to be self-reliant," he went on presently. "Your first lesson in worldliness was to be taken to-day, remember. Well, you must go through with it! I was not especially anxious for you to join the party."

"You were not. I came to please myself only."

"And you have pleased yourself and me. You are the most

charming woman present; and let me tell you these handsome Guernsey girls are formidable rivals. I am proud of you. The opening page of the lesson is a success. Don't spoil it, Dinah, by picking a childish quarrel with me now."

"I am proud of you!" The unexpected praise sent a thrill through Dinah's heart.

Her petition to Gaston to keep near her was made in a very different spirit to that of childish quarreling. On the road back from La Delivrande to Langrune it had come to pass that the walking party, following a natural law, broke up into couples, and that Dinah, unprotected by Marjorie or by Geff, found herself alone with Lord Rex Basire. Being, for his age, a very thorough man of the world, Lord Rex uttered no word at which Mrs. Arbuthnot, or any sensible woman, could take umbrage. But his manner, his tones, his looks, were eloquent with a feeling which, to her straightforward, rustic perception of things, constituted an offense.

In the matter of admiration, Dinah, as I have said, was neither prude nor Puritan. She knew the greatness of her gift. It was an every-day experience to see heads turn wherever she walked upon the earth, and, being a quite natural and single-hearted daughter of the common Mother, such acknowledgment of her beauty had never yet been repugnant to her. But the admiration covertly expressed by Rex Basire as they sauntered slowly through checkered light and shadow back to Langrune, was of another nature. Instinct warned Dinah that, if she were an unmarried girl, she might well read on this foolish young man's face and in his manner signs of love.

And the warning, to Gaston Arbuthnot's wife, was, in itself, a humiliation.

She was unacquainted with the weapons by means of which differently nurtured women parry equivocal attention. Save from Linda Thorne's lips to-night she had never heard the term "Platonic." Geoffrey was her only friend. Of men like Lord Rex Basire she knew nothing. To gaze and hint and sigh after this tormenting fashion might, she thought, be a received habit among young officers of his rank. And the torment would soon be over—if Gaston would only keep near her on board the "Princess!" Once safely back in Guernsey, and Dinah felt she could take absolute care of herself for the future. There should be no more lingering afternoon visits, no more instruction in wool-work for Lord Rex Basire. Of the lesson learned to-day, one paragraph, at least, it was clear, should be reduced to practice before another twenty-four

hours went by. If Gaston would only keep near her in the interval!

But at Gaston's praise she forgot everything. In the sweetness of that unlooked-for avowal, "*I am proud of you*," all dread of the future, all unpleasant recollections of the past, were swept clean away out of Dinah's brain. She would not risk the moment's happiness by another word. Her hand trembled as though they had gone back to the old romantic days at Lesser Cheriton, as it rested on Gaston's arm.

"Proud of me! Ah, my love," she whispered, "I hope that you and I will never have a worse quarrel than this while we live."

And when the pair of married sweethearts emerged into the glare of lamps outside Luc Casino, Dinah's face was radiant. Lord Rex, devotedly attentive at the moment to pretty Rosie Verschoyle, saw, and felt mystified. Decidedly, the Methodistic conscience, was a book wherein Rex Basire might not read.

Linda Thorne approached at once; a tall figure, diaphanous, graceful, in the lamplight. An Indian shawl was on Linda's arm, one of those exquisite dull-hued cachemires capable of investing the plainest woman with ephemeral poetry. Her hand held a bunch of wild flowers, a long trail of bindweed was twined, by fingers not unversed in millinery, round her hat.

"I hope you approve my ball attire?" She asked this with a little courtesy, her eyes addressing Gaston rather than Gaston's wife. "Our hosts tell us that we have all free entrance to the Casino, the result, I suspect, of some liberal bribe to the Administration. Really, the way our subalterns have preconcerted every detail of their picnic has quite a Monte-Cristo flavor. You are engaged to me, remember, Mr. Arbuthnot, for your first waltz."

"There will be neither first nor last, Mrs. Thorne. I exhausted the very small dancing power that is in me on Hortense and Eulalie this afternoon. I have not waltzed with a partner, over seven, for years," added Gaston. "My step dates from the days of Louis Philippe."

Nevertheless he moved away from Dinah; he followed whithersoever Mrs. Thorne might choose to lead.

She chose the Luc dunes—that broad belt of wind-blown sand, held together by coarse grasses or sea thistles, which stretches the entire length of the straggling village, and forms a welcome contrast to the burnt-up turf terrace, with burnt-up geraniums, milk-dewed urns, and peeling stucco goddesses of loftier watering-places.

This evening Luc was merry-making. There were fire-works, there was a procession of torches, one of those ever-recurring processions by which the hearts of Parisian children, big and little, are gladdened at the sea-side. Tiny figures marched, two and two, with Chinese lamps along the village causeway. A band of small boys evoked martial melody from drum and fife. Catherine-wheels rotated, rockets scurried up into space. By and by an artfully constructed bonfire of colza stalks flared up in the center of the place. Hand linked in hand the children danced around it.

" Nous irons aux bois,
Les lauriers sont coupés."

Their shrill voices rang across the dunes. Gaston Arbuthnot could descry his friends, Hortense and Eulalie, wildly circling around the red flames with the rest. As he did so, he thought involuntarily of his sketch-book, forgotten from the moment when the children laid violent hands upon him, hours ago, until this instant.

" Oh, I know! Your sketch-book is gone," cried Linda, as he felt in pocket after pocket. " This is the Nemesis that falls on creatures of impulse, Mr. Arbuthnot."

" But it is no joking matter. Every memorandum I have made during the last month—gone!"

For once Gaston's voice was tragic. He knew full well the market value of those rough notes of his.

" Every memorandum—from your first bit of Sarnian still life, an old market-woman dozing, knitting pins in hand, at her stall, down to our fisher-girl of the Boulevards. Taking into account the studies of Rahnee and of myself, there must be literally scores of valuable jottings in that book."

" You are laughing at me? No, I divine! You have taken care of my book, Mrs. Thorne, like the dear good—"

Fortunately, Gaston Arbuthnot broke off. Would Mrs. Thorne, would any woman, still conscious of youth and charm, forgive the man who, in exuberance of gratitude, should say to her, " like the dear good creature I know you to be?"

" I have taken care of your sketches," she answered, drawing the book forth from beneath her cachemire. " I have done more. You ask sometimes why I always carry a housewife in my pocket. You shall see the part my housewife has played to-day. While I sat quietly with Robbie and Mrs. Verschoyle (the young people,

very rightly, enjoying themselves elsewhere) I sewed all your ragged leaves together for you—thus."

Linda Thorne was a notably clever worker. Perhaps the length of her stitches, the breadth of her hems, were always in accordance with the orthodox feminine standard. She could effect things with her needle—such as fine-drawing a rent in cloth, or improvising an anchorage for a buttonless collar—which might be the despair of many a mistress of the craft. She did her stitching with brains.

At an out-of-the-way Indian station, as the legend ran, Mrs. Linda, under stress of some unlooked-for gayety, once manufactured an evening waistcoat for her Robbie, and a pair of neat white satin boots for herself at a sitting.

"This is capital!" cried Arbuthnot joyfully, recovering possession of his sketches. "Each page hinged on with a splendid contrivance of red silk to the dislocated remains of back. I have often wanted Dinah to devise some sort of surgery for my veteran sketch-books. She must take a lesson by this."

"Oh, no, no! Mrs. Arbuthnot is a far better needlewoman than I am. When I sew anything tolerably," said Linda, "it is by accident. I must have a motive for what I do. If I lived with—I mean, now, if dear Robbie were an artist, it would be my passion to help him in all the mechanical part of his work. If I were staying with you—and Mrs. Arbuthnot—you would discover that I can, really, in my way be useful. Michael Angelo, himself, must have had a poor obscure some one to grind his paints for him."

The pathetic image of Robbie as an artist made Gaston laugh inwardly. He was not struck by the humor of hearing his own name coupled with Michael Angelo's. Nay, it might be well, he thought, if Dinah felt this passion of unselfish helpfulness; well, if Dinah occasionally gave him the kind of praise he got from Linda Thorne. For Dinah never flattered. Her words of encouragement, unlettered country girl though she was, were full of soundest criticism. There was no honey in them. True love has its intuitions. Dinah knew that to feed this man on constantly sugared words was to poison him. She would gladly have seen in Gaston a noble discontent, gladly have listened to less frank avowals that he had found his level, and got on pretty well, there! Dinah, in short, was not a delightful acquaintance, but a steadfast, loyal wife. And her praise, in common with that of other steadfast wives, was apt to take the wholesome bitterness, the slightly sub-acid flavor of a tonic.

"Michael Angelo. My dear Mrs. Thorne, how much, how very much you overestimate me! If you spoke of me as imitating, from afar, the little affected prettinesses of a Greuze, the compliment would be too high."

"I fixed my standard for you, years ago, Mr. Arbuthnot. In the days when you used to thank me—*me*, a governess—for playing dance-music at Madame Benjamin's, I had my convictions as to the place you would one day occupy in Art."

At other times—on the morning, for instance, when we first saw the Arbuthnot trio in the garden of Miller's Hotel—Linda remembered her aspirations as to the place her friend would, one day, hold in the House of Commons. But Gaston, if he noted the discrepancy, passed it generously over. Hard for a man to believe a charming woman insincere, simply because she a little overestimates his own genius!

"Those light-hearted salad days! When I was with De Camors this afternoon—"

"The effusive little Frenchman who so nearly kissed you?"

"As long as I forgot the children, and the twelve stone of mamma, and the fact that De Camors himself is growing bald, I could have believed he and I were six-and-thirty again. Six-and-thirty used to be the sum of our joint ages."

"Do not talk of age. It is a subject about which a man may jest, while a woman just breaks her heart."

And Linda extended toward him her thin adroit hands, clasped in a pose that she had studied, not unsuccessfully, as one of pained entreaty.

"Women are younger, relatively, than men," answered Gaston, with the sincerity of his sex. "When I was two-and-twenty, Dinah's age, I knew more of the world than I know now. Whereas my wife—"

"Ah! your wife," interrupted Linda Thorne, the mask for a moment dropping, her voice hardening. "I was thinking of living, palpitating, flesh-and-blood women—inhabitants of a world where nothing is faultless save overfaultless perfection. I—I mean," she went on, rapidly recovering her self-control, "that at thirty (and I am past thirty, alas! who looks at me under broad daylight but must see it?)—at thirty a man is scarcely in the noonday sun—a woman already feels the breath of evening. Her one chill hope is—to grow old gracefully. Mrs. Arbuthnot is a girl still."

"And you—were a child when I first knew you in Paris," observed Gaston, cleverly quitting the dangerous territory across

whose borders he has been betrayed. "How natura seems, Mrs. Thorne, that we should be walking together, you and I, in the old country, with the old language round us again! Do you hear what the children are singing down on the sands yonder?"

Linda set herself to listen, her expressive hands clasped, her face bowed.

" Nous irons aux bois,
Les lauriers sont coupés "—

shouted the shrill young Gallican voices in the distance.

Mr. Arbuthnot repeated the nursery rhyme, as Murger wove it into his delightful "Letter to a Cousin."

" Nous n'irons plus aux bois. Les lauriers sont coupés.
Nous n'irons plus aux bois, oh, ma cousine Angèle!"

The lady at his side bowed her face lower, and believed, in all integrity, that she was about to be overtaken by tears. Mrs. Linda, to do her justice, was not of a lachrymose temperament. At the zenith of their boy and girl flirtation, years ago, she had never shed tear for Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot; until he appeared with his beautiful wife, had, indeed, clean forgotten her youthful weakness and his existence. But she possessed considerable imagination, a gloss of surface sentiment. She was also an insatiate novel reader, and had fallen into the habit of perennial strong emotion, leading nowhere. She could realize how a woman who had loved ought to feel, as she recalled past happiness with the lover of the past—both married, and one, alas! fast nearing an age when the most pathetic drama turns, without help from the burlesque writers, into parody.

Linda Thorne believed herself to be on the brink of tears. Gaston Arbuthnot believed so, too, and his heart could not but soften over the poor thing's impressibility. So widely different in effect are tears shed in bitter earnest by one's wife, and tears shed in pretty make-believe by the wife of another man.

"Do you hear, Mr. Arbuthnot—the dancers have changed their tune?" She asked this as the children, eddying like spirit-figures in an opera scene round the fire, broke into a new measure, "*Marie, soak thy bread in wine!*" universal refrain of all French children from the Pyrenees to the Channel. "*Marie, soak thy bread!*" How that foolish rhyme brings back the Benjamins' salon, and my place behind the piano, and you, Mr. Arbuthnot, handing round refreshments with the small slave-driver, Moïse! "*Marie, soak thy bread.*" Alas!" Mrs. Thorne's utterances grew

mystic. "We women have to soak our bread in sour enough wine, have we not?"

"The Benjamin refreshments—sugar-water, orgeat," mused Gaston Arbuthnot, keeping safely to the practical. "Yes, those were charming evenings, especially when Papa Moïse did not sing. I remember, as though 'twere yesterday, how my poor mother used to suspect Madame Benjamin of putting bad almonds in the orgeat."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FOR AULD LANG SYNE.

MEANTIME, whilst this mature pair of sentimentalists recalled the past under the starlight, the younger people, sound of heart and limb, were making the most of the present inside the walls of Luc Casino. Fine weather for their voyage, an excellent French dinner, and now a ball, with distractingly pretty girls for partners, what further enjoyment could hearts as light as the hearts of the subaltern hosts desire?

Lord Rex, only, played spectator. While Rosie Verschoyle danced waltz, polka, American, to outward seeming in gayer spirits than her wont, Lord Rex remained fixed in his attendance on Mrs. Arbuthnot, beside one of the open ball-room doors. Dinah was curiously stanch of purpose, about trifles as about serious things. She clung to "first principles." It was a first principle with her never to enter a casino, English or French, and Rex Basire vainly expended his best special pleading in seeking to change her.

Mrs. Arbuthnot objected, perhaps, to waltz with a one-armed man? Would she give him a polka, then? Would she "rush" an American quadrille? It made it ever so much more diverting if one did not know the figures of an American. Well, if she would not dance at all, would she take his arm and walk round the rooms? "Simply to put them in their place, Mrs. Arbuthnot. I have my British vanity. I want these bragging Frenchmen, accustomed to nothing handsomer than lay-figures out of the pattern books, to see *you*."

All in vain. Dinah wished neither to dance nor to dazzle. Only, if Lord Rex pleased—thus, after a space, she admonished him—it would be wise for his lordship to join the rest of his party. Miss Verschoyle was standing out; there could not be a

likelier time than the present for him to secure Miss Verschoyle's hand.

His lordship, however, did not please. And so, when Gaston and Linda Thorne returned later on from their walk, the first fact patent to both on entering the ball-room was Dinah's absence. With a quick look around, Linda discerned Rosie Verschoyle standing at her mother's side, partnerless.

"Rosie Verschoyle a wall-flower? Oh, this is too bad! What can Lord Rex be thinking of?" exclaimed Linda, ingenuously. "Mr. Arbuthnot, I insist upon your asking poor little Rosie to dance at once."

"I thought you and I were to take pity on each other, Mrs. Thorne, for auld lang syne?"

"Think of Rosie, not me. It is positively wicked for old married women to monopolize the dancing men while girls stand out."

"Are you sure Miss Verschoyle would care to have a man with deposited affections for her partner? a veteran whose waltz step dates from the reign of Louis Philippe?"

"Try her. In my young days girls would sooner dance with anybody than remain partnerless."

"That 'anybody' gives me confidence. It is good to know the exact compartment in which one is pigeon-holed."

Gaston crossed the room. He made his bow before Rosie, who moved forward graciously. Now that Mr. Arbuthnot had asked her, said the girl, in her thin staccato, she would have the enjoyment of one really good waltz. Something in Gaston's looks made her certain that he was a splendid dancer. Louis Philippe? Mr. Arbuthnot's step dated from the days of Louis Philippe? "Why, that," cried Rosie, "was before we were all born!" She confessed to never remembering about those "horrid French Revolution people," but had a notion Louis Philippe came next to the king who got his head cut off. Or was he Egalité, the man who insisted upon dying in his boots?"

"Louis Philippe came next to the king who got his head cut off," said Gaston, as his arm clasped her well-rounded waist. "I had no idea, Miss Verschoyle, that you were such a profound historian."

Linda Thorne took the chair left vacant beside Rosie's mother.

"Your dear child is looking her best, Mrs. Verschoyle. I think our Guernsey roses do us national credit. We ought to produce an effect upon the foreign mind."

"The young people are too much flushed, every one of them."

A day like this may lay the seeds of life-long malady. I know, as a fact, Mrs. Thorne, that Rosie is dancing in wet shoes."

"Better dance than sit still in them," remarked Linda, cheerfully. "You never catch cold while you are amused."

"Could we not have been amused at a quarter the cost? I have been trying in my own mind to reckon up the expenses of the expedition. Putting everything at the lowest, I bring it to something fabulous—fabulous! If these young subalterns, sons, no doubt, of needy men, had only given us a tea-drinking on L'Ancrese Common! When Colonel Verschoyle was in command—"

The time when her colonel commanded a regiment in Guernsey was Mrs. Verschoyle's one uncheckered recollection, the standard by which all subsequent mortal events must be judged!

"When poor Colonel Verschoyle was in command, that it was the officers used to do. Give us a tea-drinking at L'Ancrese and a dance for the young people afterward. No show. Very little expense. Everybody pleased. Then, of course, if you got your shoes wet you could change them."

The advantages of L'Ancrese over Langrune as a spot whereat to change your shoes seemed to touch Mrs. Verschoyle nearly. Her eyes filled.

"The money that has gone on all this," she mourned: "not to speak of the doctors' bills we may have to pay hereafter! When first the plan was chalked out I foresaw how everything would end. I entreated Rosie to reason with Lord Rex. Unfortunately I can never get my children to listen to me."

"You should have gained over Mrs. Arbuthnot," said Linda, with a spice of malice. "As the picnic was got up for her, no doubt she could have amended the programme."

Mrs. Verschoyle looked more like a little bewildered white mouse than usual, as this newly propounded idea made its way slowly to her intelligence.

"It is a most unprecedented thing! To get up a party of pleasure for a married lady without daughters! Mrs. Arbuthnot, I believe has no daughters? at all events not of an age to be introduced. Well, she is a very sweet-looking young woman," said the meek, motherly soul, through whose lips no breath of scandal ever passed. "Mrs. Arbuthnot has just that fair, placid, large look that used to be so much admired in my Flo. But the complexion is too transparent for health. Did I tell you Flo's husband was ordered to Malta? His regiment is on this season's relief, and

Flo talks of coming over to me with the children—four babies, and a native nurse. I suppose I shall be able to take them all in?”

“Easily. You have only to give up your own room and sleep in the conservatory. When Rahnee is married and offers to come home, with four babies and a native nurse, sleeping in the conservatory,” observed Linda, “is just the kind of sacrifice I shall be prepared to make.”

“You would have the old jungle ague back upon you in twenty-four hours if you did. Neither you nor Doctor Thorne are people who should take liberties with yourselves. Indeed, I think you have both been looking sadly this spring. Rosie, my dear, come here.” For the waltz had ended. Gaston Arbuthnot was walking past, English fashion, his partner on his arm. “Come and sit down by me out of the draught. I do hope this is the last dance we shall stay for, Mr. Arbuthnot?”

“No, indeed, mamma. We are to stay for the next. It is another waltz, and I am engaged for it to Lord Rex,” Rosie glanced, a little ruefully, toward the door where Dinah and Lord Rex still stood. “Thank you so much, Mr. Arbuthnot, for our beautiful waltz. I hope,” said Rosie Verschoyle, “all my partners, as long as I live, will have taken dancing lessons in the reign of Louis Philippe.”

When the opening bars of the waltz sounded, Lord Rex, with no very great alacrity, came across the room to claim Rosie's hand. Gaston Arbuthnot bent over Linda.

“‘For auld lang syne.’ Is this to be our dance, Mrs. Thorne?”

Linda Thorne was not a pretty, not by natural gift a graceful, woman. She was a perfect dancer. Poor Dinah, from her hiding-place, had found a genuine pleasure in watching Gaston waltz with dimpled, smiling, Rosie Verschoyle. For Dinah, like all wholesome-minded mortals, had unmixed sympathy with the spirits and enjoyment of light-hearted girlhood. She looked with very different perceptions at Linda Thorne, looked at her with something of the feeling a true but unpopular artist might know on watching the facile successes of meretricious talent. This tinselled, pleasure-loving Linda, with her clinging draperies, her Indian perfumes—this wife whose heart was not with her husband, this mother who contentedly could leave her child to servants—was so far below the ideal toward which, since her marriage, Dinah Arbuthnot had faithfully striven.

Below an ideal standard. And yet, in such vital points as talking amusing talk, in dancing, dressing, dinner-giving, in the all-

important matter of pleasing men difficult to please like Gaston Arbuthnot, how immeasurably was Linda her superior! Dinah's heart contracted. She was just going to shift away into deeper shadow, when a hand touched her arm with friendly purpose. Turning, she saw Marjorie Bartrand—Cassandra Tighe, laden with nets and specimen boxes, in the rear.

Marjorie's face glowed damask. "A pity you were not with us, Mrs. Arbuthnot. We have been having a glorious time, moth-hunting in the Luc lanes, Miss Tighe and I, and—and—every now and then Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot condescended to join when the chase got warm. What are you all about here?" Marjorie ascended a step, she took a smiling glance round the ball-room. "Well, this is as good as a sermon, Miss Tighe, come and be edified. Is it not fine to see middle-aged couples waltzing for the public good?"

With a little scornful gesture of the head Marjorie indicated Gaston and his partner.

"Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot may be doing his steps from personal motives, perhaps because he has the 'artistic temperament,' whatever," said Marjorie, "that elastic term may mean. Nothing but severe principles, the determination to point a moral, could make Linda Thorne go through violent exercise on a night like this."

"Linda Thorne is considered the best waltzer in Guernsey," said Cassandra. "Your tongue is oversharpe. You speak before you think, Marjorie Bartrand."

"I feel before I do either," whispered the girl, her hand stealing back, with half-shy kindness, to Dinah's arm.

"If Mrs. Arbuthnot had been with us," said Cassandra, "she would have witnessed a sight worth laughing at. Marjorie scoffs at middle-aged partners. What would you think, Mrs. Arbuthnot, of a white-haired woman flying across hedges and ditches—breathless with excitement, over the capture of a butterfly? Scarce a dozen specimens of *Pontia Daphidice* have been seen in Northern Europe during the last twenty years," went on old Cassandra, flushed still with victory. "And of these six only were netted, like mine, on the wing. Why, it would be worth staying a week here—a week, a month, on the outside chance of sighting a second *Pontia Daphidice*."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MISSING.

ALL this time the "Princess," lying well outside the Luc rocks, was getting up her steam. Before the waltz had ended a red light,

hung from the vessel's bows, gave the signal for those on shore to hurry their departure. There was a flutter of airy dresses as the English party emerged from the ball-room into darkness, a ripple of talk as they filed, Indian fashion, hand steadying hand, down the narrow path that led from the casino to the little fishing slip or jetty.

And then unexpectedly came the first misadventure that had arisen to mar this day of calm and sunshine. When the party had embarked in two of the unwieldy flat-bottomed boats of the country, it occurred to Lord Rex, as commander-in-chief, that their number should be counted. And soon the cry arose that one was wanting! Seventeen human souls left Guernsey that morning—on this point all were confident. Sixteen human souls only were forthcoming now. And no efforts of memory, individual or collective, could hit upon the defaulter's name.

Mrs. Verschoyle explained in a hollow voice that it was a most uncomfortable omen. She would be sorry to depress the younger people's spirits, but, for her part, she would sooner set sail in the teeth of a hurricane than have had this thing occur. "Let the counting be more systematic," said the poor lady, jumping to her feet, and for once in her life launching into independent action. "Let me repeat each name slowly, beginning with the youngest of the gentlemen, and let each person answer as he is called. Mr. Smith? Brown? Jones? Lord Rex? The two Mr. Arbuthnots? Doctor Thorne?"

After Dr. Thorne's name there was a moment's silence. Then Linda, tragic of accent, ejaculated, "Robbie! Of course!" And then, I regret to say, most of the younger people began to laugh. "But it may be a matter of life and death," cried Mrs. Thorne. "If you please, Lord Rex, I will go on shore at once. The 'Princess' may start, probably will start, without me. My duty is to look for Robbie. Oh, I am most uneasy! It is all my selfishness. Robbie ought never to have been brought on such an expedition. I am certain something has happened to him! I shall never forgive myself while I live."

These amiable anxieties were the exact sentiments suited to the occasion. Mrs. Thorne expressed them with agitated dignity, and, of course, no one laughed again. Consolations, even, were forthcoming. Dr. Thorne had been seen, in the flesh, outside Luc Casino; or, if not the doctor, some old gentleman exactly like him, with a puggaree, sand-shoes, a white umbrella, and smoking an enormous cigar, just like the cigar poor dear Dr. Thorne always

used to smoke. It was the prettiest, leastwise of the De Carteret sisters, who offered this bit of evidence. The gentleman was observed to look in for awhile at the dancing, and then to walk away in the direction, Ada de Carteret believed, of the sea.

"The sea! And who can tell that the sea has not surrounded him! In out-of-the-way French places the tide always swells up with a circuit." Tears were in Linda's voice as she proclaimed this maritime fact. "I am most uneasy." She adjusted her Indian shawl with grace round her shoulders, then skipped lightly to land. "Robble ought never to have been brought—it was all my selfishness—I am torn in pieces by remorse."

The young ladies, with the exception of one flint soul, cried, "No, no," in chorus. Mrs. Thorne positively must not say these dreadful things, when every one knew she had such a *character* for unselfishness! Mrs. Verschoyle felt for her smelling-salts, then settled herself gloomily down, prepared for the worst. Mrs. Verschoyle felt within her the courage of a prophet whose own dark sayings are on the eve of fulfillment.

Gaston Arbuthnot, in his quiet, unmoved manner, rose. Stepping on shore, Gaston volunteered to go in search of the missing doctor.

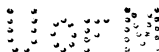
These were just the scenes wherein Linda so infinitely diverted him—Frenchman as he was in three fourths of his nature—little scenes in which, on the boards of domestic life, she played such admirable farce without knowing it!

"I shall walk straight back to Langrune, Mrs. Thorne. Notwithstanding your solemn tone, in spite of Miss de Cateret's evidence, I believe the doctor has never missed any of us, and at this moment is smoking his cigar, possibly sipping his 'little glass,' at the Hôtel Châteaubriand."

"Unless you are here in a quarter of an hour, sharp, we shall leave you behind," called out Lord Rex, when Gaston had proceeded some paces on his errand. "The 'Princess' is chartered until to-morrow only. Whatever the rest of us do the skipper will take care not to lose his tide."

Linda Thorne, by this time, in her agitation and her Indian shawl, was at Gaston's side. So the exordium might be taken as addressed to them both.

"All right," answered Mr. Arbuthnot, leisurely. "Langrune is not the end of the earth. If by the time we secure the doctor the steamer has weighed anchor, we must all get back to Guernsey, via Cherbourg. That would fit in very well. The 'Lady of the Isles'



crosses from Cherbourg to-morrow," went on Gaston, raising his voice as he looked back over his shoulder toward the boats. "We should just have time to visit the dockyard before starting."

And then the two figures sped onward, side by side. They were watched with keen speculative interest by occupants of the boats. No one, save simple Mrs. Verschoyle, felt disturbed as to the doctor's ultimate fate. Was an old gentleman who had taken admirable care of himself for forty years in India, a likely subject to be spirited away on the sands, between Luc and Langrune? But the situation had a dramatic piquancy that stirred even the unimaginative minds of the Miss de Carterets and their attendant subalterns. For there was Dinah! Impossible to forget that Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot, that lowly-born young woman with the beautiful eyes, and set, sad mouth, was also watching the two figures as they disappeared in the darkness.

"A quarter of an hour. By Jove! ten minutes of that quarter must be nearly gone."

And taking out his watch, Lord Rex struck a vesuvian in order to learn the time. It was exactly eight minutes to nine, and at nine, sharp, the "Princess" was to weigh her anchor. The moment for action had come. Now, what was the wisest thing to do? One point seemed certain—it was useless for both boats to wait longer. Let the smaller boat, at the head of the jetty, start for the steamer at once, let the captain be told what had happened, and asked to put off his departure as long as practicable. If Gaston Arbuthnot and the Thornes arrived in time, the second boat would bring them off. If not—why, common sense could really dictate no better plan than Gaston's own. Langrune was not the end of the world. A railway to Cherbourg existed. The "Lady of the Isles" would no doubt bring the lost sheep comfortably back to their respective folds to-morrow.

Dinah, as it happened, was, with Ada de Carteret and the elder ladies, in the boat at the head of the jetty. And soon before Dinah's eyes, as before the eyes of one who dreams, the reflections of the casino lamps, the children's Chinese lanterns, were dancing with fairy-like brightness across the moving water. She realized that her day of pleasure was over, that every one—yes, she could catch the voices of Marjorie and of Geoff, holding merry talk in the other boat—every one took the adventure jestingly, and that her heart felt like lead, that her hands were ice-cold, that each breath she drew was a conscious and painful effort. Well—if she had enough bodily strength to act her part out, she thought, say no word to

betray her plebeian emotions, and so bring down ridicule on her husband or herself, she must be content! Once on board the steamer she could hide herself in the cabin, away from sight, and there wait, until the comedy (or tragedy) had reached its next act. This one wretched comfort remained to her. She would be able to screen herself, for awhile at least, from observation—to be alone!

But a new and still more diverting incident was about to be woven into the text of the play.

"If I were not in such a nervous state," cried Mrs. Verschoyle, when the boat was within three or four lengths of the "Princess," "if I were not so morally shaken that I distrust my own senses, I should say our good doctor was on board. There came a flash of light just now beside the wheel, the lighting, perhaps, of a fusee, and for a second it seemed to me that I saw Doctor Thorne's figure distinctly. A pity some reliable person was not looking!"

And Mrs. Verschoyle, to her own surprise, had seen correctly. The doctor it proved to be—the doctor smoking one of the ship's best cheroots, and enjoying the summer night with unruffled innocence. He advanced gallantly to assist the ladies in their embarkation, and heard with gusto the story of his own supposed fate. Surrounded by the tide? Tut, tut! Linda might have known, had she exercised her reason, whither he had betaken himself. "Only you ladies never do reason," said the doctor, addressing Mrs. Verschoyle. "It was growing damp on shore—and let me give you a bit of advice, my dear madam; whenever you feel that clinging kind of chill, after gun-fire, get on board ship, if you have the chance. Get an honest plank, instead of the abominable miasmatic emanations of Mother Earth, under your feet. Yes, yes," went on the doctor, comfortably, "I hailed one of the 'Princess's' boats, and came on board, two hours ago, have drunk my cup of coffee, and beaten Ozanne at his own game, cribbage."

"And your wife's anxiety?"

"My dear Mrs. Verschoyle, I am penitent! Only my wife, you see, might have reasoned. It would have deprived you all, no doubt, of a harmless excitement; but Linda, I think, might have reasoned. Any way, it is better to be drowned by one's friends' imaginations than run the risk, in earnest, of a pair of damp shoes."

To this Mrs. Verschoyle gave a qualified assent. The mention of damp shoes affected her. Still, she was not a little shocked at Doctor Thorne's levity—"At his advanced age," thought poor Mrs. Verschoyle, perturbedly, "and after the awful narrowness of his escape!"

"The fear is, doctor, that Mrs. Thorne will be left behind," cried Ada de Carteret, with meaning. "At the first word of danger Linda started off along the Langrune road to look for you."

"Linda ought to have reasoned—"

"And Lord Rex declares the captain must weigh anchor at nine sharp! It is like a scene in a novel—the last scene but one, with everything in a delicious tangle still. Why, doctor, you are the hero of the day!"

"I feel enormously flattered," said the old doctor. "It is a very long time since a charming young lady has said anything so pretty to me."

"But your wife, Doctor Thorne!" expostulated Cassandra Tighe, who with her nets and cases had been the last to leave the boat. "Do you realize that if Ozanne saves this tide—if we return to Guernsey to-night—Mrs. Thorne will remain in France?"

"I can not believe it. Ozanne would not surely be so ungallant. (Allow me, Miss Tighe, to help you with a few of your packages.) No, no. The skipper would not be so ungallant. And then my dear Linda is the most famous traveler. Surely I have told you what wonderful presence of mind she showed once in the Nigiri Hills? Lost, actually lost, for four entire days! If, by mischance, Linda should be left alone, she will make her way home to-morrow, via Cherbourg, and enjoy the adventure."

"And Mrs. Thorne is not alone," cried Ada de Carteret, clapping her hands, and no doubt feeling that the position grew more and more deliciously tangled. "Mr. Arbuthnot is with her—not Marjorie Bartrand's coach, but the other one: the singing, flirting, good-looking Mr. Arbuthnot," added this vivacious young lady, profoundly forgetful that the good-looking Mr. Arbuthnot's wife stood within three yards of her elbow.

"Then my fears are set at rest," observed the doctor, genially. "If my friend Arbuthnot is there my fears are set thoroughly at rest. Meanwhile, I may as well speak to the skipper. The tide, of course, must be saved. Still, it would be only right to let Ozanne know how affairs stand."

And Dinah had listened to it all—youthful jest, aged philosophy, all! And standing among the others, with a queer sensation that she had suddenly oldened by a dozen years, some pallid ghost of a smile rose to her lips. Here was a grand opportunity, verily, of learning a lesson at first hand, a chance in a thousand for readjusting one's standard, for observing the nicer little shades of feeling

and usage which prevail in the world to which one would fain belong.

A smile, I say, rose to Dinah's lips. Which of us does not remember how, in sharp mental stress, he has found himself looking on at the trivial accessories of his pain, as a stranger might, desisively! In the poor girl's heart was death.

She knew that for Gaston to have set at naught her pleadings, for Gaston to have quitted her thus, might render to-night a bitter crisis in the lives of both

CHAPTER XXX.

LINDA WARMS TO HER PART.

BUT Dinah was not unobserved, not uncared for.

If Cassandra Tighe's taste for piquant situation once in a hundred times led her astray, the ninety-nine good offices performed by the kindly old maid in the interval were sufficient, surely, to atone for the single blunder.

Cassandra's heart went out toward Dinah at the first moment when the fair sad face passed before her in the garden of Miller's Hotel. She had listened with regret to stories of Gaston's fickleness—even while her talents as a narrator assisted in giving such stories wider currency—had felt remorse, sharp and hard, for her own unwitting share in the "Arbuthnot drama." At this hour of which I write, Dinah standing mute, wan, beside her, Cassandra's breast kindled with renewed compassion toward the simple unfriended country girl, a compassion none the less genuine in that it went somewhat wide of Dinah's actual and present trouble.

"You look thoroughly done up, my dear Mrs. Arbuthnot. I am afraid to-day's gadding about has been too much for you. Let us see," said Cassandra, in a whisper, "if we can not find some quiet corner, you and I, where we may settle down and rest."

Dinah turned on her a look of blank, unanswering pain. She wanted neither sympathy nor support, wanted only to creep below, out of sight, to avoid all temptation to disobedience, all possibility of bringing down ridicule—on Gaston!

"I feel chilled—nothing, that is, to speak of. You are very good, Miss Tighe, but I had rather go down to the saloon alone, please. I am used to being alone, and—and I have a cloak which I must look for."

A note of suppressed passion was in her voice. It betrayed

emotion curiously at variance with the commonplace words, the staid reserved manner. And, in a moment, Cassandra Tighe's valorous spirit had armed itself for action.

"Dr. Thorne, will you stop that Luc boat, if you please? Never mind my nets, they can go anywhere. Attendez, matelots! Attendez-moi," cried Cassandra in her own peculiar French, and signaling with her handkerchief to the boat, already a few lengths distant from the steamer. "It would scarcely do, doctor, to let matters shape themselves with such very slight rough-hewing! Some one must go ashore without delay. Think of Linda's anxiety if the 'Princess' should leave before she had been assured of your safety!"

"I think of many things," said Dr. Thorne, with humor, "the dampness of the night pre-eminently. Of course, I must go. Still, Linda might have exercised her reason, such reason as Providence bestows on the sex. Linda is not a child. What possible good could come from this kind of wild-goose chase?"

And the old doctor moved an inch or two, exceedingly crusty of mien, in the direction of the companion ladder.

But this was not the plan of Cassandra Tighe's campaign.

"You will just stay comfortably where you are; you will keep a dry plank under your feet, Doctor Thorne, and give me carte blanche to look after your wife. If the 'Princess' starts without us, Linda and I must find our way back to Guernsey. I have a purse in my pocket, Linda has a brain in her head. We both know how to travel. To you, Mrs. Arbuthnot, I confide my treasure." Turning round she gave Dinah a little chip box, clasping the girl's cold hands for an instant as she did so. "Take care of *Pontia Daphidice*, my dear, and take care of yourself. Look for your cloak by all means. Doctor Thorne, do you persuade Ozanne to give us every possible moment's law. I have a presentiment that all will come right, that your good wife's overanxiety will not lead her into mischief."

The unwieldy Luc boat was by this time swaying to and fro at the bottom of the ladder. A Luc fisherman stood, with bare brawny arms extended, for Cassandra's reception. A few seconds later Cassandra and boat, alike, had become a dark spot on the water, luminous now with the quick-moving facets of the rising tide. Dinah was alone, indeed!

She stood, for a time, mechanically watching the row of lights on shore, mechanically listening to the steam as it puffed, with energy unmistakable, from the funnels of the "Princess." Then,



uncertain of tread, heavy of limb as of heart, she groped her way belcw, resolved, silently, to endure whatever fate the coming half-hour may have in store for her.

The cabin lamps were as yet unlighted. Dinah entered the ladies' saloon, at hazard. She sunk down on the couch nearest the door. Then, burying her face between her hands, she strove, with might, to collect her thoughts, to stifle the resentment against Gaston which conscience, sternly just, already condemned as paltry—ungenerous.

It was of her own perverse will that she accepted Rex Basire's invitation. How often had Gaston warned her that, with her temper, her opinions, she would find "society" a dangerous experiment; a game in which she would be likely to stake gold against other players' counters! She had come here to-day to please herself. She had no right of control over her husband's actions. Gaston lived according to the light of his own conscience, not hers. He was courteous by temperament, fond of little unforeseen deviations from any laid-down programme, prompt, always, in putting his time, his energy, himself, at the service of his friends.

"Langrune is not the end of the earth." She recalled his cheery, amused tone, as he was vanishing with Linda across the dunes. "If the 'Princess' should start without us, we must get back by Cherbourg to-morrow. It will fit in very well." She remembered Doctor Thorne—his self-possession, his confidence in Gaston. "If my friend Arbuthnot is there, one's fears are set at rest." She could imagine Linda's witty reproduction of the whole too delicious accident when they should get back to Guernsey. Oh, let her gain mastery over herself—mastery! Let to-day's lesson be a deeper one than can be gained by nice observance of tone, or look, or manner. Let her have learned to conquer small jealousies, to be wary of quick judgments, to construe the actions, the intentions of others, nobly.

Dinah resolved in the spirit to be strong. Meanwhile, she realized, with growing certitude, that she was weak, exceedingly, in the flesh. Her breath came with greater effort, her hands grew colder and more clammy. Rising with difficulty, she set herself to search for her cloak among a pyramid of wraps that lay, disordered, on a neighboring couch, dimly discernible by aid of a newly lighted lamp from the main cabin. Dinah Arbuthnot's cloak lay (can Fate not be ironical even in the disposition of a heap of shawls?) immediately above a soft, long Indian scarf belonging to Mrs. Thorne. As she lifted it, the subtle Eastern perfume, associated always with

Linda's presence, seemed to Dinah, in a second, to fill the cabin. A feeling of sickness, a sudden access of keen personal repulsion, took hold of her—all-powerful hold; for, this time, it was instinct, not reason, that moved her anger. She flung down her cloak, with a childish sense of disgust at having handled it. She sunk back, passively upon the sofa.

A few minutes later came in the steward to light the center lamp.

Seeing one of the guests alone, and deathly white, he took the common sense, or steward's view of the situation. Feeling queer, already? Let him get the lady a brandy-and-soda, a glass of wine, then? Settle the system before they got into rough water—though, for the matter of that, they would have a splendid passage. Sea like a millpond, tide favorable. Nothing but running into one of these here Channel fogs to be feared.

"I will take some soda-water, if you please." Odd and far-away Dinah's voice sounded to herself. "I am a good sailor in general. I would rather have a rough sea than a smooth one. But this evening I am a little tired. I feel thirsty."

She drank the soda-water with a sense of refreshment. "The wretchedest preparation, without the B., that could be made for a voyage," thought the steward, as he stood, salver in hand, waiting for her glass. Then, when the man had again left her alone, she crept back into her place, held her hands tight to her throat to relieve the cruel sensation that well-nigh choked her, and waited.

Waited—how long she knew not—perhaps, a short ten minutes only. In recalling the whole scene, later—the swell of the rising water, the murmur of voices in the adjacent cabin, the clinging, overpowering Indian perfume—in summing up, I say, each external detail of that miserable evening, it would afterward seem to Dinah Arbuthnot that no year of her life ever took so much hard living through as those mortal minutes.

At length they came to an end. Doubt was to be set at rest, or turned into yet sharper certainty. For she could tell, first by the muffled thud of rowlocks, then by the plash of oar blades in the water, that the second boat was arriving. She could distinguish Geoffrey's voice, Lord Rex Basire's, old Doctor Thorne's—very loud this last, and didactic, but yielding Dinah's heart no consolation. Would not Doctor Thorne talk loud and didactically whether his Linda had returned from her quest of him or not?

After a time the voices began to disperse. There came the measured yoy-a-hoy of the sailors, the shuffle of feet, the fall of cable on deck. Then Dinah heard the steward saying to one of the boys

that they had weighed anchor. And not a moment too soon. With the air so thick, and the glass nohow, the skipper ought to have started, on this badly buoyed coast, a couple of hours ago. A French pilot might be all very well, but to his, the steward's mind, English daylight was better.

Dinah knelt upon a sofa, inclined her face to the cool air of an open porthole, and watched the receding French coast. There lay the villages of Luc and Langrune, a line of lights flickering, misty and irregular, above the shimmer of the sea. Far away in the distance rose one larger light, the signal lantern in the tower of La Delivrande. Dinah watched, automatically. She noted scarcely more than a play-goer, carried away by excitement, notes the scene-painting at the most thrilling situation of a drama. To her, as to a child, the whole world was concentrated under the passion that governed herself. Had Gaston come back? She longed to know this with a longing which one must call to mind her narrow past life, her more than girlish simplicity, rightly to understand. And still she did not attempt to leave the cabin. Her strength, moral and physical, seemed paralyzed. How should she make her way, alone, up on deck, search in the darkness for Gaston, ask questions, parry, with a jest, such airy explanation of her husband's disappearance as might, on all sides, be offered her?

A voice, close at her elbow, made her start guiltily.

"No one in the ladies' saloon? Well, then, Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot must have tumbled overboard. Her husband and I have vainly searched the 'Princess' for her." Oh, kindly Cassandra! Was no small bit of embroidery tacked on, just at this juncture, over the bare truth? "So much for trusting valuable entomological specimens out of one's own hands!"

"Miss Tighe, I am here. I have been trying to get a little warm. Your moth is safe," stammered Dinah.

She scarcely knew in what fashion the words left her dry and trembling lips.

"Moth? A country-bred girl like you not to know that a speckled white, although, by luck, we caught him out of hours, is a butterfly! Well, I have brought back our other pair of butterflies, safe and sound." Before saying this Cassandra had put on her spectacles and carried her box beneath the door-way lamp. She made a great show of examining its contents, critically, thus allowing Dinah to recover her self-possession, unnoticed. "From certain murmurings I overheard among the sailors I believe we, all three, narrowly escaped being abandoned to our fate."

"Mrs. Thorne had begun to think that her husband was on board?"

Dinah's constrained tone was one of doubt rather than inquiry.

"My dear, nobody ever knows what Mrs. Thorne thinks. Linda is a charming woman, the pleasantest companion, when she chooses, in the world. But, as the doctor says, Linda might reason. These electric transitions, from gay to grave, and back to gay again, are embarrassing in a world where the rest of us walk by rule. Linda Thorne is all impulse."

"Ah!"

"At the first word of the doctor's disappearance, to run off, helter-skelter, like a school-girl—yes, Linda Thorne," cried Cassandra, peering round at some person or persons across her shoulder, "I am talking of you. Come down and hear all the wicked things I have to say. At the first word of the doctor's disappearance to run off like a school-girl, taking somebody else's husband with her! It was atrocious! Who is that behind you, Linda? Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot. Tell Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, from me, that everything worth looking after on board the 'Princess' is found."

As Cassandra Tighe scored her point, not without a little air of triumph, Linda tripped gayly down into the cabin.

"We are to have the very finest weather, Miss Tighe, and all the world means to remain on deck. Only, of course, one wants shawls. What! Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

Pausing in her search among the heap of wraps, it would seem that Linda recognized Dinah's presence with amiable surprise. But Dinah was coldly silent.

"Surely you, of all people, are not going to become a cabin passenger? My dear creature, I have just escaped the quaintest little adventure in the world! But for Miss Tighe's advent, I should have eloped, yes, run clean, straight away, with your husband. We were planning it all out, from a commercial standpoint, as we flew, frantically, along the sand-hills after Robbie. Were we not, Miss Tighe?"

"I leave these matters to your own conscience," was the dry answer. Possibly, Cassandra recollected that the butterflies were not flying very frantically at the moment when she captured them on the starlit dunes. "If you had run away with Mrs. Arbuthnot's husband, I should have taken good care to run with you. I warned the doctor of my intentions before I left the 'Princess.'"

"It was quite too unselfish, Miss Tighe, and, peculiarly, most à propos. I possessed five sous in copper (Guernsey currency); Mr.

Arbuthnot was worth something under twenty francs. We should have had to leave our watches at the Mont de Piété—for me, alas! no novel experience—the moment we reached Cherbourg. Things have turned out, under Providence, for the best. Only, I think, *think*,” admitted Linda, with arch frankness, “the doctor rather regrets having to retire into insignificance. If I had not come back, Robbie would have remained the hero of the situation.”

Mrs. Thorne ran through all this in her accustomed little tired, inconsequential way of talking, winding up, finally, with a long and earnest yawn. She then danced up to a strip of mirror at the best lighted end of the cabin and settled herself to the contemplation of her own image with interest. She dabbed her cheeks first with rice powder, then with eau-de-cologne, then with powder again, producing these cosmetics without a show of disguise from a tiny gilt case that hung at her waist-belt. She arranged the folds of her cashmere scarf above her sleek head in a certain Gitana mode, which, like all good art, gave an idea of unpremeditation, and became her mightily; she pinned a knot of feathery grass, a memento doubtless of the starlit dunes, in her breast.

Easy to predict that Linda Thorne would not be seasick to-night! She was warming to the situation, intended to work up her part—everything in human life was a part to Linda Thorne—with spirit.

“Come up on deck, Mrs. Arbuthnot, will you not? Surely, with your splendid sea-going qualities, you are not going to stop down in this Black Hole of Calcutta?”

“Mrs. Arbuthnot will come up when I do,” cried Cassandra, who, with an added pair of spectacles on her nose, was pinning out insects under a lamp. “Go your ways, Linda Thorne, wise ones if you can, and leave Mrs. Arbuthnot and me to follow curs.”

“I would not be wise if I might,” said Linda, giving an expressive backward glance across her shoulder. “If I were wise—I should see myself as other people see me.”

And having uttered this, the acutest speech that ever left her lips, away floated Mrs. Thorne, with her powdered cheeks, her cashmères, and her Indian fragrance, from the cabin.

Dinah could hear the languid accents, the little stage laugh (learned from the stalls), for a good many seconds later. She could distinguish the voices, too, of Gaston, and of Rosie Verschoyle. How heart-whole they all seemed. How frequent was their laughter! What a light time the past hours had been to every one of the party but herself! Gaston’s philosophy, thought Dinah, taking an

unconscious downward step, might be the true one after all, then. Live while we live! What had she profited by a strain of feeling too tall for the occasion, by the tiptoe attitude, by throwing away gold where a more reasonable member of society would have quietly staked counters?

"Any admittance here?" exclaimed a masculine voice, as an impatient hand pushed back the cabin door. "Why, Mrs. Arbuthnot, I have been searching for you everywhere. I want you to come up on deck at once, please, and see a comet. Not a comet really, you know," Lord Rex went on, looking hard at Dinah's white face. "Some kind of Japanese fire balloon sent up by the French people. However, it does just as well as one."

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Arbuthnot, go," cried old Cassandra, glancing up, over her double spectacles, from her pinning. "It will take me an hour's work to bring all my specimens straight. And your color shows you want oxygen. You are right, Lord Rex. Take Mrs. Arbuthnot on deck to see this comet which is not a comet. I shall follow by and by."

And Dinah Arbuthnot obeyed. She did more. Dinah allowed the tips of her cold fingers to rest within Rex Basire's hand as he pioneered her up the cabin stairs into the semi-darkness of the night.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WIFE AND HUSBAND.

THE outlook continued promising overhead. The tide was at the right ebb for making Barfleur Point. At an earlier hour than had been hoped for, the friendly Casket lights showed, at intervals, above the starboard bow of the "Princess." The skipper, cheerful of voice, promised his passengers that in forty minutes more—tide and weather remaining favorable—the vessel would be lying well to leeward of Alderney.

All this time Dinah had found no opportunity for exchanging a conciliatory word with her husband. She felt that Gaston did not so much avoid as ignore her. He always contrived to be deep in talk with some other person when his wife sought to draw near him. He did not address her, did not recognize her presence. At length, abruptly, just as Dinah was nerving herself to make some desperate first advance, Mr. Arbuthnot crossed the deck. He came up to the spot where she and Rex Basire stood together. With the pleasantest air imaginable he put his hand under Dinah's arm.

"Suppose you take a turn with me, wife?" Mr. Arbuthnot made the proposal in his pleasantest tone, Rex Basire listening. "Do you see that revolving beacon? No, my dear, no! Neither aloft on the funnel, nor in my face, but away, far as you can look to the right. That beacon marks the Casket Rocks. And there straight ahead, but without any lights showing, as yet, we are to believe is Alderney. Let us make our way to the fore-castle. We shall have a better view."

The fore part of the deck was deserted, save by two or three knots of sailors, talking low together in patois French as they watched the horizon. Gaston and Dinah were practically alone. She felt the heart within her throb uneasily. An icy politeness lay beneath the surface geniality of Gaston Arbuthnot's manner. Dinah was prompt to recognize it.

"What a long day this has been, Gaston. I shall want no wider experience in respect of yachting picnics."

"You are changeable, Dinah. As we walked from Langrune to Luc, it was agreed between us that the day should be considered a success."

"A great deal has happened since then," exclaimed Dinah, under her breath.

"Nothing very notable, surely. If I recollect right, I did my duty to the extent of two waltzes in the Luc ball-room, and you, my dear child, had a long, a most amusing and intellectual conversation, I can not doubt, with Lord Rex Basire, in one of the doorways."

"Lord Rex Basire is never amusing when he talks to me."

"Then I congratulate you on your proficiency in seeming amused. It ranks high as a difficult social art, even among veterans."

"Gaston!" she exclaimed, a new and poignant doubt making itself felt.

"Dinah."

"I don't know what to think of your tone. Why have you never said a word, never looked at me during all these hours? Are you offended?"

"On the contrary," retorted Gaston. They were now out of sight, out of earshot of everybody. As he spoke, Arbuthnot withdrew his hand from his wife's arm. "I am thoroughly your debtor. It was the sense of my indebtedness that made me bring you here. I wished to thank you without an audience, quietly."

"To thank *me*," stammered Dinah, in a sort of breathless way. "For—for—" she broke off, reddening violently.

Gaston watched her. "For your solicitude, your kindly tact! That idea of dispatching the old lady in the scarlet cloak to chaperon me was boldly original, a fine intuition of wifely vigilance—"

"Gaston! I never—"

"Yet scarcely the sort of vigilance that passes current in a commonplace and scoffing world. If you had the smallest spark of humor, Dinah—that missing sense! that one little flaw in your character!—you would see things as the commonplace scoffing world sees them."

"Should I?"

"You would divine that, under no possible circumstances—really it would be well to remember this for the rest of our mortal lives—under no circumstances can I require an old lady, with or without a scarlet cloak, as my chaperon."

A different woman to Dinah might here have turned the tables on Gaston Arbuthnot, have stoutly, truthfully disavowed responsibility as to Cassandra Tighe's movements. Dinah was too transparently honest to defend herself as to the letter, knowing that she had been an accessory in the spirit.

"When the time was so short—ten minutes more, Gaston, and the 'Princess' would have started without you—I felt that my heart must stop. Miss Tighe, any one, could have seen on my face what I suffered."

"I have no doubt that 'any one' could, and did see it," said Gaston Arbuthnot, with grave displeasure. "It would not occur to you to make an effort at decent self-control, whatever ridicule you might be bringing upon others. Does it never strike you, Dinah," he went on, unjustly, "that other women have human sensibilities as well as yourself—Linda Thorne, for instance? She rushed off, poor thing, in the greatest agitation at the first whisper of the doctor's disappearance, fearing nothing from Mrs. Grundy, fearing all things for her husband. Was it generous, charitable, do you think, to let your disapprobation be written so that he who ran might read upon your face?"

"I think," said Dinah, faithfully, "that Mrs. Thorne felt no agitation whatsoever."

Gaston also thought so. It was a point he would not commit himself to argue out.

"There are feelings one must take for granted. Mrs. Thorne did the right thing in refusing to start without her husband. I

acted as I judged best in determining to remain by her. That ought to have been enough for you."

"Yes. It ought to have been enough."

Dinah gazed before her at the purplish streak faintly dividing the sea-line from the sky. It grew blurred and tremulous. Her eyes had filled with tears.

"You had plenty of people to bear you company—Geoffrey, Miss Bartrand. It is unbecoming in you, Dinah, to act like a wayward girl. However matters had turned out about Doctor and Mrs. Thorne, what hardship would there have been in your returning to Guernsey with Geoffrey and without me?"

"None, none! I was wrong from first to last. All this is my lesson, remember. One can not get a lesson by heart without a little trouble."

"One might learn it without making everybody else absurd," persisted Gaston. "You asked me why I had never addressed a word to you, never looked in your direction, since we put out to sea. I will tell you why, my dear. I considered you dangerous. I was afraid."

Dinah lifted up her face. She fixed her truthful and transparent gaze full on Gaston Arbuthnot.

"I don't understand you, Gaston. You know I never can understand when you speak with a double meaning."

"Well, there was a certain electric look about you, a look prophetic of lightning or thunder-showers, for neither of which I am in the mood. You ought to have chosen a husband of more heroic mold, Dinah. There is the truth. A man, like the hero of a lady's novel," observed Mr. Arbuthnot, wittily, "always equal to a strained attitude. A man fond of the big primeval human passions—love, hatred, jealousy. But you have married me, and I am afraid you must take me as I am. You must also, as often as you can—remember this, Dinah—as often as you can, endeavor not to render me ridiculous."

When Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot re-emerged out of the darkness, Gaston's hand was resting on his wife's shoulder, Dinah's face had recovered its calm. It would have taken a keen observer of countenance to guess that a breeze so stiff as the one we know of had just stirred the surface of these two persons' lives. Was Linda Thorne such an observer?

Linda was standing alone in the gangway, her attitude one of deliberation, when Gaston and his wife came aft. She kept her position, speaking to no one, until Lord Rex, companionless, like

herself, had managed to find his way to Dinah's elbow. Then Linda Thorne made a move. She crossed to the vessel's side. Resting her hand on the bulwarks, she gazed heavenward. Such good lines as her throat and shoulders possessed were well outlined against the pallid background of sky.

Gaston Arbuthnot followed her before long.

"We are fortunate, after all our misadventures, are we not? The mate tells me that we have sighted Alderney. It seems likely that we shall get back to Petersport without fog."

"And what, may I ask, do you mean by our misadventure?"

There was a ring of sharpness in Linda Thorne's tone.

"Ah—what! The moment," said Gaston, "when gleams of a scarlet cloak first flashed upon one along the sand-dunes seems, to my own consciousness, about the most serious of them."

"You are singularly insincere, Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot!"

"I can not agree with you, Mrs. Thorne. My worst enemies, on the contrary, have the grace to credit me with a sort of brutal frankness."

"And, supposing no scarlet cloak had appeared? You would willingly have been left, a second Robinson Crusoe, on the desert shores of Luc?"

"The cases are not parallel. Robinson Crusoe had only the society of his man Friday."

"And there were no beaux yeux to weep for him! So many years," observed Linda, "stand between me and the literature of my childhood that I am uncertain about details. But I don't think one ever heard of a Mrs. Crusoe?"

Gaston knew that he was being laughed at. He kept his temper charmingly.

"And there is, very decidedly, a Mrs. Arbuthnot. When I think of Dinah, I can not call Miss Tighe's advent a misadventure. Poor Dinah has a child's quick capacity for unhappiness. Her imagination would have conjured up a dozen possible horrors by sea and land, if I had not returned to her."

"That is all so very, very pretty, is it not?" Linda stooped, as if watching the rush of the sea; Gaston Arbuthnot could not catch the expression of her face. "We professional old travelers are toughened and sun-baked out of all rose-water nervousness. Robble has told you—whom does he not tell? the story of my being lost, actually lost, in the Nilghis? If I were to be mislaid for a fortnight, I really don't believe the doctor would suffer a moment's uneasiness."

"And yet you were so cruelly upset by his disappearance. The superiority," apostrophized Gaston, "of the unselfish sex over ours."

"I was not only upset by his disappearance," said Linda, still taking an interest in the waves, "I am disturbed about him, in my conscience, still. If Doctor Thorne takes the slightest chill tonight, we shall be having the old jungle fever tack upon him."

Gaston sympathized as to this contingency, not, as yet, perceiving the drift of Linda's alarms.

"At Robbie's age one can not be too prudent. To run into one of these cold Channel fogs might end in something quite too serious. And, although the stars make a pretense at shining," Linda raised her head with tentative playfulness, "the enemy is at hand. I feel fog in the air."

"The air is clearer than it has been all day. In another three or four hours the sun will have risen. We shall be in Guernsey—"

"In another twenty minutes we shall be outside Alderney Harbor. I was talking matters over, some minutes ago, with Ozanne." Linda inspected the white hand, resting on the bulwark, with attention. "And he has most good-naturedly consented to let me and Robbie land. By signaling promptly for a boat we shall not detain you 'Princess' people five minutes. There is the dearest little primitive hotel in Alderney, close to Maxwell Grimsby's diggings. You remember my telling you about it?"

Gaston remembered Mrs. Thorne's telling him about the dearest little primitive hotel.

"The doctor will have a good night's rest to recruit his strength, and to-morrow afternoon, if the day is warm, we shall make our way back to our home and infant by the Cherbourg steamer."

Now Maxwell Grimsby, a gunner by profession, a painter by love, was one of Gaston Arbuthnot's best artist friends—best, too, in the higher acceptance of the elastic word. Grimsby was no manufacturer of prettiness, no amateur idler. Did not a series of beach studies bearing the well-known initials "M. G." testify to the world how diligently this very summer's enforced imprisonment in Alderney was put to use? During the past fortnight Gaston had constantly vacillated in his intention of looking up his friend, forever declaring how much better work a man might do on the grand old rock, yonder, than disturbed by the hundred distractions of pleasant, idle, sociable little Sarnia—never starting, forever wishing he were gone! Here was occasion to his hand, a

chance of looking up Grimsby without even the preliminary trouble of packing one's portmanteau!

"Of course you could not come with us," asserted Linda, in her little undertone of mockery. "Mrs. Arbuthnot is such a child. She would conjure up a dozen possible horrors if you were to be absent from her so long."

"I am not sure that deserting the 'Princess' would be a courteous action to our hosts," said Gaston Arbuthnot, hesitating under the first touch of temptation.

"You are made of poorer stuff than your cousin," thought Linda, glancing, for a second, at his handsome face. "To gain a victory over Monsieur Geoffrey would be to gain a victory indeed." Then aloud: "If we were to carry away any of the younger people, I should feel it treason to desert the 'Princess,'" she observed. "I would not go, indeed, if Robbie and I were wanted as chaperons. Considering the existence of Mrs. Verschoyle and Miss Tighe—in talking of chaperons, Mr. Arbuthnot, you and I must never forget Miss Tighe—I think Doctor and Mrs. Thorne may very well be spared. For you it is different."

"In what way?" asked Gaston, wincing inwardly under her sarcasms.

"Oh, different, altogether. Too much depends upon your presence. Pray do not think of such a revolutionary proceeding as taking flight. You would never be allowed—I mean, I am sure you would not find it advantageous to run away. What messages do you send to Mr. Grimsby?"

"None."

"That is severe. You do not believe in my delivering them intact?"

"I mean to deliver them myself."

Linda Thorne laughed incredulously. "I wish I could make an enormous wager at this thrilling juncture," she remarked with persistence. "Come, Mr. Arbuthnot. Will you bet me a single pair of gloves that you will be—that you will quit the 'Princess' when we do?"

"It would be betting on a certainty," said Gaston. "My mind is made up. I am really glad of the chance of seeing old Max."

"You have told me something of the kind already. You refused a wager I offered you last Monday afternoon, because it would have been 'betting on a certainty.' And yet, as the event proved, I should have won."

"The event will prove that you do not win now."

There was more than a threat of impatience in Gaston Arbuthnot's voice.

"And you do accept my bet, then? You do stake a pair of gloves that you are—that you will land at Alderney with Robbie and myself?"

"If you are bent upon giving me a pair of gloves, Mrs. Thorne—iron-gray, seven and a half—I shall accept them with pleasure."

"Done! The bargain is concluded. My number, as you know, is six and a quarter, Jouvin's best. I wear eight buttons. And now," added Linda, preparing to move away, "I must find our hosts, and make excuses. Had I not better offer them on your behalf, too?"

"You are too kind to me, Mrs. Thorne. I think I have just courage enough to pull through the emergency, unassisted."

Lord Rex was still lingering in Dinah's neighborhood when Linda tripped airily across to the gangway, Gaston Arbuthnot following her.

"Doctor Thorne and I have to thank you, all, for quite one of the most perfect excursions in the world. I shall put a mark against the subalterns' picnic," said Linda, diplomatically. "It has been one of the true red-letter days of my life."

"Don't talk of the picnic as over, Mrs. Thorne. The subalterns look forward to some hours more of your society, even without the promised fog."

"Ah, that terrible fog! I must confess, the word makes me nervous, for the doctor's sake. A fog, you know, means damp—that constant bugbear to us old East Indians."

"But the voyage is half over. Here we are, almost, in Alderney harbor."

"And here, I am afraid, my husband and I ought to bid you all good-night. Captain Ozanne has offered to signal for a boat. We should not delay the 'Princess' five minutes. Really and truly, Lord Rex, I think the wisest course will be for Doctor Thorne to land."

"Doctor Thorne to land? Another mysterious disappearance! And shall you, Mrs. Thorne, immediately follow suit, as you did at Luc?"

"Of course I shall! The whole Luc comedy will be repeated." And here Linda's voice grew intentionally clear and resonant.

"The Luc comedy, with the original cast and decorations, for everybody's amusement."

It was a wantonly cruel speech—Dinah Arbuthnot stood within

hearing! Yet Linda Thorne's conscience was void of offense. She belonged by temperament to the irresponsible class of mortals who can never resist the temptation of histrionic effect. For what, save histrionic effect, had she cojoked the skipper, the old doctor, Gaston, into this freak of midnight disembarkation? And when once a woman's tongue and actions are ruled by the eternal desire for smart dramatic point, it must be clear that other women's sufferings will pay the price of her success.

Dinah's heart froze. She divined, without going through any distinct process of reason, what announcement she was likely to hear next.

"If the Luc scene is to be repeated, I conclude you, too, are going to desert us?"

Lord Rex Basire addressed himself to Gaston Arbuthnot.

"Well, it has been borne in upon one during the last fortnight that it was a duty to look up old Grimsby," began Gaston. "And this—"

"And this is duty made easy. Go, my dear fellow, if you have had enough of us," cried Lord Rex, lightly. "But go on one condition—that you do not take Mrs. Arbuthnot. Mrs. Arbuthnot is our chaperon-in-chief. We can not spare her."

"Mrs. Arbuthnot has Miss Bartrand under her charge—have you not, Dinah? I am afraid you could scarcely—"

"I should, under no circumstances, think of landing at Alderney," said Dinah, in a voice uncomfortable strange to Gaston's ear. "I am not afraid of fog. I do not wish to see Mr. Maxwell Grimsby. Why should I leave the 'Princess'?"

"Where your presence is the life of the whole party," pleaded Lord Rex. "You must not let your husband persuade you into throwing us over, Mrs. Arbuthnot."

Quietly, firmly, came Dinah's answer:

"You need not be afraid. There is no risk of my being persuaded, Lord Rex. I am great deal too wise," she added, "to go away from people who care to have me."

And no further word of explanation or of farewell was exchanged between Dinah and her husband. Into the irrevocable mistakes of life is it not singular how men and women constantly drift after this blind, automatic fashion?

Only at the last moment, when the "Princess" had slackened speed, when the boat that had been signaled for was fast approaching from Alderney harbor—only at this last moment, I say, Gaston

addressed a remark to Geff which Dinah felt might be taken by her, if she chose.

"I shall be back to-morrow, unless anything very unforeseen happens. If it does, I can telegraph for my portmanteau, and—"

Geoffrey whispered a word or two in his cousin's ear. "Of course, of course. I have every intention of coming back. I merely said 'it.' You will have a magnificent passage," added Gaston, shaking hands heartily with Lord Rex. "Duty takes me to old Max. Inclination would have kept me with my hosts on board the 'Princess.'"

Despite the neat turning of this speech, away Mr. Arbuthnot and the Thornes went—Linda, with her cachemires, her bouquets of wild flowers, her fears for Robbie, her wafled kisses to her friends, creating little theatrical sensations to the last. The boat was visible for a few seconds only, so swiftly did the "Princess" again get under way. There was a profuse waving of handkerchiefs. "Good-night, every one!" rang cheerily across the water in Gaston Arbuthnot's voice. And then Dinah awakened to the knowledge that she was forsaken, this time by no accident, but of cold-blooded, determined forethought—forsaken, with all the world to see; with Lord Rex Basire persistently talking, as though nothing of moment had happened, at her elbow.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ROSE-WATER SOCIALISM.

DINAH did not turn from him. Nay, although her brain was in a whirl, although her voice was not under command, although her heart was bursting, Dinah's lips smiled. She was monosyllabic, Lord Rex felt, but monosyllabic with a difference. And eager to improve the scantiest, most meager encouragement, he began instantly to ransack such memory and imagination as were his for pertinent subject-matter.

"Frothy small-talk, personal compliments, local gossip, were little relished, as he had proved, by Dinah Arbuthnot. She did not read newspaper trials, had never opened a society journal, knew nothing about actors or actresses, or novels, or prime ministers, or popular divines. You could not get her even to talk about herself. But then, that face of hers! If one might, quietly, stand gazing at her surpassing fairness as one does at a canvas or a marble, Lord Rex

Basire, on this summer night, would have asked nothing more. His duties as a host, however, the sense that others might construe his silence into deficiency of wit, forced upon him articulate speech.

"Awful hole, Alderney, for an idle man! Now I was stationed there for three months and got through an awful lot of work. No good letting circumstances beat you. I colored a meerschaum first-rate—worked at it, morning, noon, and night. I taught two of my terriers to march on hind legs, while I whistled the 'Marseillaise.' Favorite tune of mine, the 'Marseillaise.'"

"So your lordship has told me."

Dinah thought of their first conversation at the rose-show.

"I loathe classic music—loathe everything, in art and literature, but what I can understand. Ever seen Maxwell Grimsby's Alderney sketches, by the bye? Dab of greenish-gray for the sea. Dab of bluish-gray for the clouds—Storms, Sunsets, Whirlwinds, things you may as well frame upside down as straight, if you choose."

No, Dinah had never seen them.

"Maxwell Grimsby's an old friend, isn't he, of Arbuthnot's? That accounts for your husband throwing over all us people on board the 'Princess.'"

To this there was no answer. The balls had, certainly, not broken well as regarded Alderney. Clearing his throat twice, after a more redoubtable pause than heretofore, Lord Rex at length sought a wild and sudden refuge in English politics. He had never in his life talked politics to a pretty woman, reserving his views, which were of the rose-water socialistic school, for after-dinner eloquence among his brother subs. So desperately new an experience as Dinah required desperate measures! To talk well above this young person's head, thought Lord Rex, who held no mean opinion of his own intellect, might awe her into appreciation. And the subject he chose for his experiment was that of class inequality.

The emptiness of all titles, the folly of all social pre-eminence, were themes on which Lord Rex waxed hot, exceedingly. Perhaps he was sincere. Rose-water socialism, I must admit, did not sit without a certain grace on this sunburnt little dandy, a grace to which his slung arm, shot through in the forlorn defense of English Empire, gave the added zest of piquancy.

Dinah unthawed at once. She broke into talk. In the matter of class differences, Gaston Arbuthnot's wife held fixed opinions, and could express them incisively. But her ideas were not Lord Rex Basire's ideas. Lord Rex had got a vast deal of rabid rhetoric by heart, very picturesque rhetoric in its way, and coming from the

lips of a duke's son. Dinah had sharp, clear knowledge, gained at first hand, through the vicissitudes of her own marriage. To Lord Rex social inequality was a party question—kind of thing, don't you know, that, vehemently taken up, may sometimes land a man, with a following, in the House! To Dinah it was the hidden enemy, the impalpable barrier that stood between her and her husband's heart. Lord Rex had learned pages of showy axioms to demonstrate that social inequality should never exist. Dinah's life was one long, irrefragable, stubborn proof that it existed.

"Your remarks have a terribly Conservative flavor, Mrs. Arbuthnot." When they had talked for some considerable time he told her this. "Impossible you can be a Conservative in reality?"

"Gaston calls me an old-fashioned Whig. I don't know the meaning of the word. I only pretend to understand these things in the humblest way, from my own standpoint."

"But you are in favor of the nationalization of the land? You would do away with the laws of primogeniture? You don't think a few thousand loiterers, slave-drivers, should hold big estates—for their pheasants—because each elder son, let him be fool, knave, or coward, is heir to them?"

"Without such laws where would our English families be, my lord, our barons, and earls, and great dukes, like your father?"

"Oh, where they came from," said Lord Rex, disposing of the question, jauntily. "Labor was the original purchase-money paid for all things. You believe that much, at least, Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

"If the succession law was swept away we might lose more than we can afford along with it." Dinah had heard ultra-revolutionary notions freely aired at times among Gaston's friends, and, in her one-sided way, had striven, over her cross-stitch, to think them out. "I, for one, should not like to see any church or chapel in England turned into a lecture place for these new unbelievers."

"Unbelievers! Oh, that is quite a different story. We began by talking about the folly of class differences."

Dinah was silent awhile. Then: "It would be impossible for you and me to think alike on all this," she told her companion, with a grave smile. "You have seen so much of the world, Lord Rex, perhaps have heard the debates in the Houses of Parliament?"

Lord Rex confessed that this intellectual advantage had befallen him.

"And I have just watched the lives, the manners of a few more

or less troubled men and women. Class differences, as you call them, may be folly. They are the hardest facts I know, the—"

Dinah saved herself, just in time, from adding, "the cruelest."

"Beauty is the universal leveler," observed Lord Rex, with presence of mind. "A perfectly beautiful woman would grace the steps of any throne in Europe."

"Leave thrones alone, Lord Rex Basire! If the beautiful woman wanted to make others happy, she would have most chance to do so in her own class of life."

"And suppose the beautiful woman wanted to be happy herself, Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

"Happiness comes naturally if you see it on the faces of the people round you."

Their politics had not taken the turn Lord Rex desired. He harked back, a little abruptly, upon his first premises.

"Yes, I am for absolute equality, Gardener Adam and his wife, and that style of thing. I would make the shopkeeping capitalist, just as much as the bloated aristocrat, turn over a fresh leaf. If I ever marry," said Lord Rex Basire—"don't feel at all like marrying at present, but if I ever do—I hope to get for my wife some simple little village barbarian who has never been to a ball, never heard an opera, never seen a race-course in her life!"

"A village barbarian—of what station?" asked Dinah Arbuthnot.

"Matter of blank indifference. I should marry the girl, not her station."

"And afterward? Would the barbarian be accepted by your family? Or would you accept hers? Or would you, both, give up society?"

"That would suit me best! Give up society. United to the woman one adored," said Lord Rex with fervor, "what could one want with artificial pleasures, with the eternal bore of dinners and dances?"

Dinah gave a chill laugh. She remembered the days when Gaston Arbuthnot was wont to use the like phrases, as a preface (so, in her present jealous misery, she thought) to returning to the world and its pleasures, unhampered by a wife.

"When you marry, my lord," she observed, distantly, "you will, if you act wisely, choose some duke's or earl's daughter for your wife. Give up that notion of the village barbarian. As time wore on, and—and the truth of things grew clear, the duke's

daughter would, at least, understand you. There could be no discoveries for her to make."

Lord Rex turned and faced Dinah Arbuthnot, good-humoredly ignoring the coldness of her bearing toward himself.

"Your opinions are desperately mixed, Mrs. Arbuthnot. You may be Conservative in theory—you would be a staunch Republican in practice! I am afraid, now, that a man with the misfortune—I mean, you know," stammered Lord Rex, lowering his voice, "that you could never bring yourself to care, ever so little, for a man with any wretched sort of handle to his name."

"I beg your pardon, my lord?"

"A man belonging to the most useless class of all—the class that so many of us who are in it would gladly see done away with! Such a man would never find favor in your sight?"

"Would have found, do you mean, when I was a girl of seventeen?" Dinah asked in tones of ice. "I can give no answer to that. Girls' hearts are moved by such trifles—a title, even, might turn the balance. But I and my sisters lived in a little Devonshire village. We saw nothing whatever of high folks, and—"

"I am not talking of Devonshire villages!" exclaimed Lord Rex, interrupting her hastily, but dropping his voice still lower. "I am not talking of the time when you were seventeen—I mean now."

Dinah recoiled from him on the instant. Idle compliments had moved her, at length, to an extent Lord Rex dreamed not of. For she could not forget that this was all part of her lesson, that her companion was making speeches such as better-born women, careless mothers, wives of the type of Linda Thorne, might just listen lightly to, parry, and forget. With the thought came a thought of Gaston. A flood of shame tingled in her cheeks.

"You ask me questions beyond my understanding, Lord Rex." So after a strong effort of will she brought herself to speak. "My choice was made, happily, long ago. How could any man but Gaston find favor in my sight!"

Now Lord Rex Basire, his tender years notwithstanding, had seen plenty of good feminine acting, of the kind which dispenses with footlights and the critics, the acting required in the large shifting comedy of human life. Although his own delicacy was not extreme, or his perception sensitive, some unspoiled fiber in his heart vibrated, responsive to the honesty of Dinah's voice. This woman acted not, could never act! Her fealty to her light, neglectful husband was part of herself. Duty and happiness for

Dinah were simply exchangeable terms. She could taste of the one only in the fulfillment of the other.

"That was very charmingly expressed, Mrs. Arbuthnot. I hope, when I marry, my wife will say the same pretty things of me, if I deserve them, which I shall not! Characters like mine don't reform."

"There will be more chance of reformation if you marry than if you don't—especially if you choose the duke's daughter," added Dinah, stiffly, "not the barbarian."

"And without any marrying at all! If some woman, as good as she is fair, would hold out her hand to me in friendship, would let me think that I held a place rather lower than a favorite dog or horse would hold in her regard! If—if—ah, Mrs. Arbuthnot! if *you*—"

But Lord Rex speedily discovered that he was apostrophizing the waves and the stars. At the moment when his eloquence waxed warmest, Dinah Arbuthnot, village barbarian that she was, had walked away, without one syllable of excuse, from his lordship's side.

He watched the outlines of her figure as long as they were discernible through the gloom; then, drawing forth his vesuvians and tobacco pouch, prepared to smoke a lonely pipe of wisdom on the bridge. Lord Rex was in a fever of perplexity. Until the last five days he had never cared for living mortal but himself. His brief fealties to the prettiest face of the hour, Rosie Verschoyle's among the number, had been so many offerings at the shrine of small personal vanity. All this was over. His surrender to Dinah's nobler beauty, his recognition of Dinah's pure and upright nature, had roused him thoroughly out of self, made him look searchingly at the aims, the pleasures of life, and acknowledge that there were human affections, human felicities, high above the range of his own light and worldly experience. Did happiness thrive in that lottier, chill atmosphere? Was Gaston Arbuthnot to be congratulated, wholly, on his lot?

One thing was certain—so Rex Basire decided, as he betook himself gloomily to the bridge. However this drama of domestic life might end, it would be monstrous, impossible, that he, Rex Basire, should be peremptorily dismissed therefrom, dismissed as one occasionally sees the frustrated stage villain, long before the final falling of the curtain!

"And even if it is so," mused Lord Rex half aloud, and drawing upon reminiscences of Nap. in his ill-humor, "if no choice lies

before one but to 'accept misery,' misery let it be! The man who goes blue does not invariably find himself in the worst position at the end of the game."

But the lad's philosophy was lip-deep only. Lord Rex Basire had never felt less cynically indifferent to loss and gain than in this hour.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CLOSE TO PORT.

THE short June night drew to its close, and still the weather continued fair. The sky was full of stars, a solitary lambent planet quivered in the east. By the time the moon had sunk, with pale metallic glow, above the motionless Channel, a welcome point of fire was visible over the starboard bow of the vessel—the beacon of Castle Corner light-house.

A little flutter ran through the groups of expectant people keeping watch together upon the deck of the "Princess." It was well to have got back safely, without fog. And still, whispered the younger ones regretfully, the most delightful picnic in the world had come to an end, all too soon! Even Mrs. Verschoyle, emerging with salts-bottle, with chattering teeth, from the cabin, conceded that, for a yachting expedition, and although L'Ancrese Common would have been a thousand times more reasonable, their misadventures had been few. How comforting, murmured the poor lady, with a shudder, if it were not for the cold—this curiously increasing cold—to keep one's eyes on the familiar harbor light, to realize that in another hour and a half at latest, they would be all warm and asleep in their beds!

But the cold increased still, and, for a midsummer night, was undoubtedly no common cold. It found its way through plaids and waterproofs, it got down throats, it caused fingers to become numbed. The mate was seen to button up his pilot jacket as he made his way with precipitate haste to the men on watch, the skipper moved from one foot to the other as he stood consulting his compass. Both skipper and mate glanced anxiously ahead, toward the west, where no horizon showed.

'One would scarcely have expected the stars to set so suddenly,' observed Mrs. Verschoyle. In this lady's youth it is probable that school-girls did not, as now, learn the exact sciences. "But depend upon it, the captain knows his way. The sailors are taking pre-

cautions, I heard the steward say so down-stairs, by using the lead. And I remarked that they were seeing most attentively to the small boats. Besides, I have heard more than one gun fired. No sound so reassuring at sea as the report of a gun! A skilled old mariner like Ozanne would not be dependent on anything so chancy as the stars."

"But, mamma, the harbor light-house has set, too," cried Rosie Verschoyle, who stood shivering at her mother's side. "Everything is setting. I don't see our own funnel. I don't see the flower in your bonnet as clearly as I did two minutes ago."

"I wish you would talk soberly, child. You know how much I dislike this kind of ill-timed chaff. Who ever heard of a light-house setting?" observed Mrs. Verschoyle, with melancholy common sense, "and why does the 'Princess' go so slow? The skipper, no doubt, has his reasons, still he might remember we are not all as fond of the sea as he is. I was never less nervous in my life, and—sailor! sailor!" Mrs. Verschoyle flung herself before a figure, wrapped up in tarpaulin, crowned by a sou'-wester which loomed with gigantic proportions through the thick air. "Would you say, if you please, why the steamer goes so slow? And are we in danger—off our track or anything? And why does one seem all at once to lose sight of Castle Cornet light-house?"

The sailor was a weather-beaten old Guernsey man, possessing about twelve words of Anglo-Saxon in his vocabulary. Mrs. Verschoyle, however, in her agonized desire for truth, stretched her arms forth in the direction of the vanished red light. She also articulated the words Castle Cornet with tolerable distinctness. Her meaning had made itself clear.

The answer, proceeding from the depths of a gruff, tobaccoey throat, was incisive:

"Brouillard!"

And brouillard it proved, clammy, ice-cold, yellow, after the manner of all mid-Channel fogs. At first every one affected to take this reverse of fortune as a jest, the little bit of mock danger that was needed to point a moral to the preceding day's enjoyment. So providential, said the ladies, in a pious but quavering chorus, that the "Princess" lay close on shore before the fog grew thick. The skipper's duty, clearly, was to make straight for St. Peter's harbor and land them. Only, why lose time? Why steam so slowly? What object could Captain Ozanne have in exposing them to this mortal cold a moment longer than was needful?

Mrs. Verschoyle, after a few minutes' suspense, voted for indepen-

dent action. She had, indeed, broached a project of creeping up to the men at the wheel and imploring them to "turn faster," when there came a general stir among the crew, followed by a rattling sound which most of the party had sufficient sea-going experience to recognize. The "Princess" was about to cast her anchor.

Just at this juncture appeared Lord Rex, fresh from hurried consultations with Ozanne and the boatswain. A suspicious unconcern was on Lord Rex Basire's face, a note of forced cheerfulness in his tone.

"Lucky we have got so near home, is it not, Mrs. Verschoyle? We are about two miles from shore, they say—Ozanne of course, knows every yard of water—just within or without the *Grunes*, whatever the *Grunes* may mean. We shall only have to ride half an hour or so at anchor—awfully jolly sensation, I can tell you, with a south-west swell. And then, as the mist rises, we shall steam clean into Petersport."

But this show of jauntiness misled no one. The De Caterets, Cassandra Tighe, Marjorie Bartrand, all understood their position better than did Lord Rex. And it was a position of the utmost gravity. The "Princess" was lying in dense fog, surrounded by shoals, across the very highway of the Channel night steamers. For an old and wary seaman like Ozanne to have been forced to anchor at such a strait did but render the fact of his helplessness more pointed.

"What does it all mean? Are we not close to port, madam?"

The ladies were pressing together in groups. Dinah whispered the question across Cassandra Tighe's shoulder.

"Close to port—of one kind or another," answered Cassandra, vaguely unorthodox to the last. "As long as nothing runs into us we may do well enough. And dawn is at hand. At sunrise the fog may lift. Your husband ought to be here with you," she added, misinterpreting a certain vibration of Dinah's voice.

"I thank God that he is not! Alone, there is nothing to be frightened about. I thank God that Gaston is safe—warmly housed, away in Alderney!"

And, in truth, a reasonless, half-pleasurable excitement, the reaction after so much dull pain, had arisen in Dinah's heart.

That a dark "perhaps" lay straight and immediately before them, became at each moment more plain. The continued firing of guns gave token that other vessels were in the same plight as the "Princess"—once, indeed, a steamer drifted so close that they could see the faint reflection of her signal lamps, could hear the

beating of her gong. The dreary sound of the fog-horn, the muffled tramp of the men on watch, the lights burning aloft in the ship's rigging, the partially lowered boats, the solemn faces of the skipper and the crew, all combined into one unspoken word—Danger.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DEAD ROSE PETALS.

DINAH ARBUTHNOT thought over the few quarrels, the many misunderstandings of her married life, grown little, all, before the hour's largeness. She thought how, in five or six minutes more—a collision, in weather like this, would be over briefly—in five or six minutes more she and Gaston might be parted, with never another kiss from his lips to hers. He would cherish the thought of her to his last breath, if she were lost to-night. She recognized the true metal in the man, was sure enough of that. Possibly, the remembrance of her, calm and untroubled in her grave, might prove a stronger influence over him for good, a keener stimulus to his genius, than her restless, jealous life had ever been!

On such terms, she asked herself, was death a thing to be met with craven fear?

Most of the party, obeying simple bodily wretchedness, crept, one after another, below—poor frightened, frozen Mrs. Verschoyle at length confessing that she would sooner be drowned comfortably in the cabin than stand up longer against the sickening roll of the anchored vessel on deck. Marjorie Bartrand, Dinah, and Miss Tighe lingered, Lord Rex and Geoffrey Arbuthnot (forced into comradeship for once) keeping up their spirits with cheerful talk, with stories well remembered or well invented, until a pale forecast of daylight began slowly, uncertainly, to filter through the fog. Then came a new untoward event to crown this night of misfortune. A lad on the forecastle had stumbled in the darkness over a coil of chain, and a cry quickly arose that the surgeon's hand was wanted. The poor fellow lay in agony, with a twisted or broken ankle. Was there not some doctor on board among the gentlemen who could help him?

Away sped Geoffrey Arbuthnot on the instant, bestowing no consolatory word—Marjorie's heart honored him for the omission—on the ladies thus abandoned to their terrors and their fate.

"And now," said old Cassandra Tighe, hollow and far-away her

voice sounded through the blanket of fog, "I think we women folk will do well to betake ourselves elsewhere. Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot has set us an example of duty. You have been a pattern host," she added, addressing Lord Rex, "and it is right you should be set free. We must take our chance with the others in the cabin. You hear me, Marjorie Bartrand?"

Marjorie heard, but was stoutly recalcitrant. It was her duty, she said, to die hard, and according to Act of Parliament. She would in nowise give up her chance of the boats, should a collision befall the "Princess;" could swim like a sea-gull if the worst came to the worst. Lord Rex, of course, must be considered off duty. For herself, if Mrs. Arbuthnot would stay with her under one of the covered seats, she asked nothing better than to stop on deck and watch for sunrise. Cold? How would it be possible to take cold at midsummer—swathed, too, in all these wraps, and with the excitement of a first class adventure to maintain the circulation of one's blood.

And indeed, there burned a flame in Marjorie's breast that kept her whole being warm, a flame, pure and delicate, the like of which kindles in these poor hearts of curs once only, perhaps, between our cradle and our shroud.

"We are dismissed, Miss Tighe," said Lord Rex, gallantly offering his unwounded arm, as Cassandra tottered to her feet. "Cling to me like grim death. Don't mind appearances. If Mrs. Arbuthnot and Miss Bartrand have the courage to freeze, we must leave them to become icicles. I want to see what can be done for our poor terrified ladies down below."

Lord Rex must have seen to the terrified ladies expeditiously. Five minutes later he was at his post again, no rug, no great-coat about his shoulders. With feminine appreciation of detail, Dinah was prompt to mark this sign of self-forgetfulness—simply hovering near, ready, she reluctantly acknowledged, to buy her life with his own should the moment of peril really come.

And Gaston Arbuthnot, all this time, was taking his rest, quietly irresponsible, away in Alderney! Dinah, being a just woman, did not credit her neglectful husband with the density of the fog. Still, in danger, as in safety, the master passion possessed her heart. Her thoughts, at one moment tender, at the next reproachful, were of Gaston always. And her lips kept silence. Marjorie Bartrand also was disinclined for talk. In Marjorie's mind thrilled a remembrance so sweet, so new, that she was glad passively to rest under it, as we rest under the influence of a good and wholesome dream.

—a remembrance of the half confession made to her in the Langrune Lane, whose flower smells and swaying yellow corn lingered in her senses still. And this, happiness being a far likelier narcotic than pain, it came to pass ere long that while Dinah Arbuthnot watched with ever-increasing vigilance, the young girl's eyes grew heavy. The sound of the fog-horn at each interval roused her up less effectually, her head drooped upon her companion's shoulder: "Your wish has come true, although I have the misfortune to be myself, not Gaston." The cold and darkness vanished, blessed sunshine began to shine around her, the fog-horn changed to the note of the cricket among the ripening corn-fields. Marjorie Bartrand slept.

By this time Dinah judged the sun must be close upon rising. It seemed to her that the different objects on board were growing a very little clearer. Moving with difficulty from her position, she rolled up a pillow out of one of the plaids, and slipped it under Marjorie's sleeping head. She enveloped the girl's whole figure in the thickest of their rugs, then began to pace, as sharply as her stiffened limbs would allow, up and down a short portion of the deck.

"We are not to say 'ta-ta' to the wicked world this time, Mrs. Arbuthnot." The wise remark was Lord Rex Basire's. He had been absent during the last quarter of an hour, and now reappeared bearing a salver on which stood a cup of smoking coffee. (Looking back in after-hours on the shifting scenes of this night, Dinah often felt, remorsefully, that her most fragrant and excellent coffee was prepared by Lord Rex's own hand.) "I overheard the steward talking with the mate just now, and they prophesy a change of wind. If this comes true, the fog will lift in half an hour. See, I have brought you some coffee."

Dinah glanced toward Marjorie.

"Oh, Miss Bartrand is fast asleep, dreaming of pipozes and Girtton! I watched her nodding before I went below. It would be cruelty to wake her."

"I must say the coffee smells tempting," Dinah admitted. Then, swayed by quick impulse: "Lord Rex, you are very unselfish!" she exclaimed. "You have thought of nothing but other people, and their troubles, all this night."

"On the contrary, I have thought of myself. I have had a capital time, Mrs. Arbuthnot—for I have been near you."

Dinah never looked more nobly handsome than at this moment. A cold night, passed without sleep, a greenish-yellow fog, must

be fatal adversaries, at 3 A.M., to all mere prettiness. Dinah's beauty could stand alone without coloring, without animation. The lines of her head and throat, the full calm eyelids, the lips, the chin, could be no more shorn of their fair proportions than would those of the Venus Clytie—should the Venus Clytie chance to be exposed to the mercy of a Channel fog.

"You have been near a very stupid person, my lord. I have had too much heaviness on my heart to talk," confessed Dinah. "I have scarce exchanged a dozen words even with Miss Bartrand.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot, have you forgiven me? do, please, drink your coffee before it is cold—don't make me feel that I am in your way—boring you as usual; have you forgiven a horribly foolish speech I made, just before you disappeared in the darkness, you know?"

"Which foolish speech?" asked Dinah Arbuthnot, laconically, but innocent of sarcasm.

"Ah, which? I am glad you are good-naturedly inexact. And still," went on Lord Rex with characteristic straightforwardness, "foolish or not, I meant every word I said. If the woman I loved was free, would look at me, I should be a changed man, would make my start in the world to-morrow."

"Make your start?" repeated Dinah, off her guard.

"Yes. Look after sheep in New Zealand, plant canes, or whatever they do plant, in South America, and feel that with her, and for her, I was leading a man's life."

And for a moment Dinah Arbuthnot's pity verged on softness.

Listening to the genuine emotion in Rex Basire's tone, glancing at the lad, in his thin drenched jacket, as he stood, holding the salver ready for her coffee cup, his devotion—by reason, perhaps, of an unacknowledged contrast—touched her. For a moment, only. Then she stood, self-accused, filled with a sickening detestation of her own weakness. That she was more than indifferent, personally, to Rex Basire, that he would have been distasteful to her in the days when she was fancy-free, the girlish days before she first saw Gaston, extenuated nothing to Dinah's sensitive conscience. She had tacitly condoned the folly of Rex Basire's talk! Latent in her heart there must be the same vanity, the same small openness to flattery, which she had, without stint, condemned in women like Linda Thorne. Was this self-knowledge a necessary sequel to the abundantly bitter lessons which the last twenty-four hours had taught her?

"Do you forgive me, Mrs. Arbuthnot? Speak one word, only.

ered on the window-seat. Dinah took the flower in her hand mechanically. Its definable, delicate aroma, Gaston's favorite scent, unlocked a thousand poignant associations in the poor girl's brain. Their days of courtship, their first married happiness, nay, her own perfect unswerving loyalty, seemed all to have become as falsehood to her. She had learned her lesson overwell, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, would walk in Eden, at her lover's side, no more.

It was a moment of such blank surrender, such total sense of loss, as comes but once in a life-time.

Fortunately, the world's average of hope remains constant, poor consolation though an acquaintance with the law may be to the hopeless. At this moment rapid steps approached along the pavement. There was the sound of hearty youthful laughter. Looking forth, the rose crushed with passion between her hands, Dinah beheld a young girl and a man pass the window. It was Marjorie and Geff, starting away, with buoyant pace, in the direction of Tintajoux. A prophecy of all the joint to-morrows of their lives shone brightly on the faces of both.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A TRAITRESS.

BUT their speech betrayed them not. Roseate stage of the passion when unacknowledged lovers are conscious each of the other's secret, yet talk upon commonplace subjects, look celibacy, stoutly in the face, still. If that hour only lasted! If the clover would not lose its first honeyed sweetness, if the gold would stop on the wheat-fields, if the thrushes would sing love-ditties till September, instead of becoming respectable heads of families in June!

"You put forth to sea as a martyr, so I will not ask if you have enjoyed yourself, Mr. Arbuthnot. I have. Without giving up a prejudice against military folk in general," said Marjorie Bartrand, "I pronounce the subalterns' picnic to have been a success."

"Success—looked at from whose focus, Miss Bartrand? Poor Jack, with his twisted ankle, scarcely appreciated the cleverness with which we managed to kill a day and night of our existence, depend upon it."

"Nec did Mrs. Verschoyle. 'If we had only been drinking tea,' so I heard her make moan through the fog—'drinking tea as we used on L'Ancrese Common, when the colonel was in command!'"

"Miss Tighe, at least, enjoyed herself. Other conquests may have been made," observed Geoffrey, a little inappositely. "Miss Tighe captured a new butterfly! A human being with a hobby possesses a joy that all the sorrows and passions of our common nature can not rob him of."

But neither Mrs. Verschoyle nor Cassandra served to open out wider interests. The conversation flagged sensibly, and Marjorie's pace quickened. For the first time since she began to read with Geff, Marjorie felt that she was at a loss for subjects in talking to her tutor.

"I am afraid your cousin, Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot, did not take much pleasure out of the day."

She made the remark after some deliberation, and without looking round at Geoffrey's face.

"It was a mistake for Dinah to go," Geoffrey answered, keeping his gaze very straight before him. "Dinah's life is a dull one. The kind of Bohemian wandering existence which suits Gaston as an artist robs his wife of the household tasks in which she could take honest heart. If I were not so mortally afraid of you, Miss Bartrand—"

"Of me?"

"I should use a French phrase."

"Please do! I delight in your command of modern languages."

"I should call Dinah *desœuvrée*," Geff, you may be sure, pronounced the word atrociously. "But she will never find compensation by frequenting Gaston's world. At this moment poor Dinah, I know, feels heavier in spirit than if she had stayed quietly at home with her book and her cross-stitch."

"She is beautiful beyond praise. In these regions one gets tired of mere pink and white prettiness. It is a thing of the climate. Every girl in the Channel Islands has her day of good looks. Mrs. Arbuthnot's is a face of which you could never grow tired."

"I believe I am no judge of beauty. Gaston tells me frequently to admire people who to my taste are horrible monsters—'type Rubens,' I think he calls them. It requires an education to admire the 'type Rubens.' One does not like a face, or one does like it—too much, perhaps, for one's own peace."

Geff spoke in a tone that brought the blood into Marjorie's cheeks. The girl had blushed with other feelings could she have guessed—she, who would accept second love from no man—that at this moment his thoughts had wandered to a remote Cambridge-shire village, and to the peace of mind he lost there!

"Mrs. Arbuthnot seems to me so thrown away—you must let me speak, although I know it is a subject on which you can bear no contradiction—so cruelly thrown away upon a man like your cousin Gaston."

"No other woman would suit my cousin Gaston half as well."

"That is the true man's way of putting things. 'Suit Gaston.' Would not a less Frenchified, less universally popular husband, suit Dinah better?"

"I am quite sure Dinah, who should be a competent judge, would answer 'No.' Miss Bartrand," broke off Geoffrey, with notable directness and point, "I wonder why you and I are discussing other people's happiness just at an hour when we ought to be thinking about our own?"

The remark was made with Geff's usual seriousness. But Marjorie, reading between the lines, discerned some obvious joke therein. She laughed until the high-banked road along which they walked re-echoed to her fresh voice. Then starting at a brisk run, she took flight along a foot-track which, diverging from the *chaussée*, led through a couple of breast-high corn-fields, across a corner of the common land, to Tintajoux.

Untaught daughter of nature though she was, Marjorie knew that every moment brought the supreme one nearer in which Geoffrey Arbuthnot must speak to her of love. Although the conclusion was foregone, although her whole girlish fancy was won, she strove, with such might as she possessed, to stave that moment off. For she knew that she was a traitress to her cause, an apostate from the man-despising creed in which, recollecting the sins of Major Tredennis, she had gloried.

Fast as her limbs would bear her the girl sped on, Geff Arbuthnot, with swinging, slow run, nicely adjusted to her pace, following half a dozen yards behind. "Renegade!" every bush along the familiar path cried aloud to her. "Renegade," whispered the stream trickling down between rushy banks, through beds of thick forget-me-nots, to the shore. The corn-fields were soon passed. They reached the breezy bit of moor above the *Hûets*. The ravine where the water-lanes met lay in purple shadow; all around was warm and joyous sunshine. A scent of fern and wild thyme filled the air. Far away the tide curled round the dark base of the Gros Nez range. The crouches and daws were flying across the face of the cliffs. The gulls poised and swooped, flashes of intense white against the background of green sea.

For very want of breath Marjorie presently stopped short. Geff

was at her side in a couple of seconds. The young man caught her in his arms.

"Mr. Arbuthnot—sir!"

"I thought it my duty to steady you." He liberated her, partially, and with reluctance. "Your pace, Miss Bartrand, is killing. Do the Guernsey Sixties ever play hare and hounds? You would make a really respectable hare, I can tell you."

"I hope not." With a little air of ill-maintained stiffness Marjorie contrived to put a few more inches between Geoffrey and herself. "Who would wish to be anything really respectable, until one gets to the age of the seigneur, at least?"

"We shall both of us be too stiff for hare and hounds by that time."

Perhaps this was the first hour of his life when Geoffrey Arbuthnot talked nonsense with a child's sense of enjoyment, a child's immunity from care. Hard facts, hard work, had made up the sum of his existence, hitherto. His stanchest friends complained that he was just a little too grimly lord of himself. In his undergraduate days the men of his year, despite their recognition of his muscular and sterling qualities, had a suspicion that there lurked a skeleton in some hidden closet of Arbuthnot of John's, a memory, or a dread which rendered the easy philosophy of youth impossible to him.

Dinah, who knew him well, Gaston, who knew him better, never saw the look on Geoff Arbuthnot's strong face which lit it in the red freshness of this Guernsey morning.

"How shamefully we lose the best hours of the day!" Marjorie's hand rested, as she spoke, on a wicket-gate, overgrown by sweetbrier, which led into the manoir gardens. "Did you ever smell cherry-pie so sweet before?" Hellotrope was a passion with old Andros Bartrand. Rows of the odorous purple bloom, profusely flourishing in this generous climate, garnished the borders, even, of his kitchen garden. "I, for one, mean to mend my ways. I shall get up with the sun from this day forth."

"Alter my hours, then. We could read together, out of doors, at sunrise, just as well as in the school-room at eleven."

"Do you think we should do much serious work, Mr. Arbuthnot?"

Marjorie asked the question with assurance, then colored up to the roots of her hair.

"Not unless breakfast were part of the programme," said Geoffrey, with discernment. "At this moment," he added, "I am re-

mind of my school-boy days in the City. I recall, forcibly, the starvation pangs that used to unman us on dreary winter mornings over the pages of our Latin Grammar and Greek Delectus."

It was not a sentimental speech. Even when treading the primrose path, nineteenth-century young people are rarely indifferent, like the heroic lovers of an older school, to their meals. And these young people had really eaten nothing since yesterday's dinner in Langrune. Confessing that she too was famished, Marjorie proposed an instant sack of the Tintajoux dairy and larder. There was a broken pane in one of the dairy casements through which, luck befriending them, a bolt might be drawn. From the dairy it would be only a step to the larder, and then, having secured their booty, they could go forth and eat their breakfast together in Arcadia.

"It is a bigger adventure, I can tell you, Mr. Arbuthnot, than any which befell us on board the 'Princess.' Grandpapa and Sylvestre keep loaded carbines, and are quite careless as to time and place in the matter of firing their weapons off."

"I am not fond of carbines—still, hunger overcomes my natural cowardice," said Geoffrey. "I would brave Sylvestre—I would brave the seigneur himself for a bowl of milk."

The dairy, almost hidden from view by thickly planted alders, lay at the northern end of the manoir, immediately under a window of the old seigneur's study.

"You hold your life in your hand," whispered Marjorie, as they stepped noiselessly along. "Grandpapa is always astir by this hour. If he were to look through his window, you see, he might fire first and recognize you afterward."

"Although you are my accomplice?"

"He would be in the right, any way, according to old Norman law. What is a seigneur worth if he may not use fire-arms at discretion? We should lodge the accident officially, au greffe, plead self-defense, if the case ever came to be heard, and pay an amende of a few hundred francs to the island poor."

She gave a little shrug of her shoulders which expressed that the subject was disposed of satisfactorily.

The broken pane, shrouded in green leaves, was conveniently near the casement bolt: Sufficient space existed for Marjorie's slim hand to pass through the opening. There came a click as she slipped the bolt back in its setting, a slight groaning sound as Geoffrey Arbuthnot lifted the sash guardedly. Then the heiress of

Tintajoux made good a somewhat undignified entrance into her own house, her tutor keeping watch for possible intruders outside.

Oh! the ice-cool sweetness of this Guernsey dairy, the air entering in free currents through gratings in either wall, the big pans filled with golden cream, the butter of yesterday's churning standing, in tempting pats, upon the fair white shelves! Marjorie plunged a jug boldly into a pan of milk only set last night. It seemed—as she remembered Suzette, the fiery-tempered dairy-maid—like a first plunge into crime. Conscience, however, as occurs in weightier matters than pillaging cream, hardened rapidly. To glide on tiptoe, from the dairy to the larder, to cut some solid trenches from a new-baked raisin loaf intended for the seigneur's lunch-table, was a minute's work.

Then Miss Bartrand handed out her spoils to Geoffrey Arbuthnot. She cleared the window at a jump. The sash was stealthily closed, the boughs were pulled back into place, and away the pair walked, across cedar-shadowed lawn, through the cool and dewy maze, to Arcadia.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LAST OF ARCADIA.

NEVER could the spot have justified its name more thoroughly than at this hour.

The syringa bloom had fallen during the past week. No odor, save the delicate, intangible freshness of sea and moor, met the sense. There was not a wrinkle on the far Atlantic, not a cloud in the arch of sky. They chose a plot of grass for their breakfast-table so small of dimensions, it was not possible to sit far apart. They had their platter of cake, their jug of milk in common. Surely no shepherd or shepherdess in real Arcadia was ever lighter of spirits than were these two!

"I have learned the taste of nectar," said Geff, when the wedges of cake had vanished, when the milk-jug stood empty. "In repayment of your hospitality, Miss Bartrand, I am going to bring a sharp accusation against you."

"Which is?" Marjorie asked, her blue eyes meeting his with steadiness.

"The nectar you give may perhaps be poisoned, an enchanted philter taking the taste out of all one's future life."

"I should call that a cruel, an unjust accusation," cried the girl,

her cheeks ablaze. "Explain yourself! I don't like a thing of this kind said, even in jest."

"I was never further from jesting. Poison is a harsh word, certainly; still—still," broke off Geoffrey, with the abrupt courage of a shy wooer, "do you think a man could ever be as well contented with the grayness and plainness of English life after an hour spent here, in Arcadia, at your side?"

Her face grew graver and graver.

"If you mean this for nonsense talk, Mr. Arbuthnot, you offend me. I do not care for flattery."

Marjorie Bartrand rose to her feet. As Geoffrey followed her example, he took out his watch, then replaced it in his pocket without noticing the hour. Both were a little pale; both had grown suddenly constrained. An unaccustomed mist made the familiar objects round her seem blurred in Marjorie's sight.

"I must go back to the house," she faltered. "The servants will have risen by this time. Of course one ought to feel tired, and to want rest."

She stooped, under pretense of picking up the platter and jug, in reality to hide her face from the man who loved her. But her fingers were unsteady. An instant more, jug and platter both were slipping from her grasp, when Geff, quick of eye and touch, caught them, and Marjorie's hand as well.

She did not say again that nonsense talk offended her.

"I should like you to understand one thing, Mr. Arbuthnot." It was a good while later on when she told Geoffrey this. Her slight hands rested unresistingly in his, the unmistakable print of love confessed was on the faces of both. "Perhaps what I am going to say will make you alter your opinion of me; it must be said, all the same. There shall be no Bluebeard secrets between us to come to light hereafter. There was a fortnight's mistake in my life, once. I—I—" the word seemed to scorch her lips as they passed them, "have been engaged before."

"So the voice of gossip told me, long ago, Miss Bartrand."

In an instant Marjorie rested her cheek, with a child's rather than a woman's gesture, against Geoffrey's arm.

"You ought not to say, 'Miss Bartrand,' now. From this day until death comes between us I must be 'Marjorie' to you."

"Marjorie," repeated Geff, with quick obedience, "what concern of mine is it that you were engaged before you knew me? I dare say I shall be an ogre of jealousy in the future. I can not be

jealous retrospectively. The evil passion will date from this present hour, only."

But Marjorie insisted, whatever pain it cost her, on giving him the details of her first engagement, yes, even to the ring she accepted, to the tears she shed over Jock, the setter puppy. And would Geoffrey have felt no concern, she asked him, with a flush, in conclusion, had things been different? Could he have felt no retrospective jealousy if she had happened to care for Major Tredennis?

"I like to think you did not care for him. I like supremely to know you care for me," was Geoffrey's answer.

"Because, of course, no human being can, honestly, love twice," observed Marjorie Bartrand, with conviction. "It must be all or nothing. I wish you to know, although I was weak enough to be engaged to Major Tredennis and to take his presents, and to listen to his French songs, *it was nothing*. I could not look into your face as I am looking now, if I had cared the value of an old glove for him, or for any man."

"No human being can, honestly, love twice." So this was a fixed article in Marjorie Bartrand's belief! The reflection made Geoffrey pause. Of the belief's fallacy, his own state of feeling was pertinent evidence. Four years ago he had loved Dinah Thurston with love as ardent as was ever lavished by man on woman. And now this wayward Southern child, with her terrible classics and worse Euclid—this child, with the deep, sweet eyes that promised so much for the future, and the chiseled sun-kissed hands, and the mouth, and the hair—had filled his heart to overflowing.

A certain tacit disingenuousness seemed forced upon him. That prettily-told episode of her first engagement, of the major's French songs, his presents and his flatteries, was in absolute truth a challenge. But Geoffrey's conscience smote him not as he let the challenge pass. His passion for Dinah was no "fortnight's mistake." It was a part of himself. In losing her he got a wound that he must carry with him to the grave. He could no more have touched upon the theme, lightly, than he could have spoken lightly of his dead mother or of the childish prayers he used to repeat in the shelter of that mother's arms.

The girl he sought as his wife was exquisitely fresh and to be desired. Already, in a brief half hour, every hope of his future life seemed to have some silken thread of *Marjorie* woven in its fabric. She was unconnected with his past. The passion that had died, the regret that would never die, were his own. Their history

was not to be told, save under dire necessity, of which the present rose-colored moment gave no forewarning.

"I knew from the first that you had been engaged to Major Tredennis, and from the first," Geoffrey Arbuthnot drew her toward him, tenderly, "I began to fall in love with you."

"Not quite from the first?" Marjorie questioned, artfully insuring a repetition of the honeyed truth. "Not on that evening when you put me through my intellectual paces, when you told me that my classics—save the mark!—were stronger than my mathematics?"

"Yes, on that first evening. It was not because of your prettiness, only, or your grace. It was not, even, because you snubbed me so mercilessly. I don't know why it was. It seemed that a new world had suddenly opened out before me. As I returned along the Gros Nez cliffs, the Tintajoux roses and heliotropes in my hand, I felt like walking right above the mire and commonness of my former life."

"And your thoughts?"

"Were of Tintajoux, every yard of the road. Yes, I am clear about it," said Geff. "I began to fall in love from the first moment that I saw your sweet Spanish face."

Marjorie shook her head at the compliment. Her looks were skeptical.

"Your manner, I confess, did not betray you, Mr. Arbuthnot," she remarked dryly.

"Did you condescend to notice my manner?" Geff asked. "The whole of that evening, remember, except perhaps for a minute, when you had wounded yourself among the briars, you held me at arm's-length."

"I thought you a married man, sir. But I liked—I respected you, brusque though you were, because I believed you had had the courage of your opinions, the strength of mind to marry Dinah. How strange," she went on, dreamily abandoning herself to his caress—"how strange it will be, when we are old people, to remember that our acquaintance began in such a comedy of mistakes."

Because he had had the strength of mind to marry Dinah! The

irony of her speech smote Geff Arbuthnot's heart. He then, as a virtue, with the fulfillment of that

"Marjorie," repetition took the keenest edge off his life, the cern of mine is it that youth!

dare say I shall be an old, foolishly or wisely," went on Mar-

Marjorie's happy voice. "I had built up mine since I was eight years old. Well, when I heard of a Mr. Arbuthnot who was able enough to have taken high honors, good enough to give up his fame to others, brave enough to have married a girl beneath himself in class for the excellent reason that he loved her, when I heard these things—the personal histories of the Arbuthnot cousins cleverly mixed and transposed by poor Cassandra—I felt that my ideal was clothed with flesh and blood. What could I do but care a little for my new tutor?"

"Married though the tutor was?"

"That is beside the question. I was thinking of his fine qualities only. I held out my hand to him in friendship before we met, even, and I—I know that I was never for one instant in love with Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot."

Marjorie Bertrand colored with slightly illogical vexation.

"Are you quite sure that you are in love at all?" asked Geoffrey.

For a few seconds an uncertain smile trembled round her lips. She drew back from him, half ignorant whether his question had been asked in earnest; then, lifting her eyes, Marjorie encountered the beseeching entreaty written on Geoffrey's face. There came impulsive, overquick submission.

"I mean to love you with my whole soul some day. Does not that content you? Well, then, I mean—if you will give me breathing space—to love you now."

The midsummer morning was young, the blackbirds called aloud for joy in the Tintajoux orchards, and Geoffrey Arbuthnot's age was twenty-four. Before they parted, ere Marjorie could repulse him or surrender, he caught the girl in a swift embrace; he kissed her reverently, passionately, on the lips.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A STONE FOR BREAD.

THE kiss cost him dear. A fledging girl is not, finally, to be captured without a struggle, save by a master hand; and Geoffrey's was the hand of a apprentice.

Marjorie's heart leaped with novel tenderness at the contact of his lips. She suffered him to hold her in his arms. She watched him with shy pride, with a child's delight in the new sense of ownership, as he walked away, along the accustomed path, from

Tintajoux. Then, later, when she found herself in her own little white-draped realm, when, later still, she had slept and awakened and dressed herself for a fresh day, the current of feeling averted. She shivered at realizing how absolutely her life had become entangled with his. She was assailed by reminiscences, all uncomfortable ones, of Major Tredennis. She was sensible of a longing, that had almost passion in it, for the liberty she had been betrayed into relinquishing.

"I mean, if you will give me breathing-space, to love you now." Here, surely, was what she needed—time for becoming used to the new phenomenon of a lover.

During the past fortnight, Geoffrey had filled every thought of her waking hours; a haunting sense of his nearness had touched her dreams. At this point she had fain stood still—six months—a year—tacitly engaged, if need be, but on the same fraternal footing as when they walked together yesterday among the Langrune corn-fields. Why hurry into commonplace? The Bartrands were not a kissing race. Geff ought to have divined their likes and dislikes, thought the poor child petulantly. And yet, pleaded another voice in this conscience of seventeen, the kiss was sweet! It seemed that she had become, suddenly and distinctly, two persons—one a girl weakly contented, as our grandmothers used to be, at the prospect of husband and home and fireside; the other, a strong-headed, Minerva-like young woman coolly criticising the question of love and marriage from a vantage ground, and liking it ill. Which of the two—she asked herself this, pretty often, throughout the sunny tedium of the long day—which was the real, which the artificial Marjorie Bartrand?

It had been settled between them that Geoffrey should walk out to Tintajoux before the seigneur's supper-hour that evening. When the time came, when Geff approached the manoir, treading lightly as befits a man whose heart wells over with hope, he found the friendly school-room window bolted. No youthful flitting figure was to be seen among the growing shadows of the garden; Arcadia was empty. Andros Bartrand, leisurely pacing, a cigar between his lips, his terriers at his heels, possessed the lawn.

With a dim sensation of chill Geoffrey rang at the front door, and was ushered in by Sylvestre, a whole lever de rideau in the old butler's expressive Norman smile, to the drawing-room. Here Marjorie, mutinous of spirit, but with a tenderly blushing face, awaited him. The western lights filtered through the half-closed venetians. Above the cedar-shade gleamed as unstained a sweep

of Atlantic as on the first evening that Geoffrey visited Tintajoux. The Petit Trianon baskets were filled with glorious Duces de Rohan. The Cupids were hurling rose leaves at the guillotine. The miniature Bartrands, imperturbable as becomes mortals who have proved the nothingness of love as of life, seemed to glance with rather more philosophic amiability than usual from their frames.

Well, all that Geoffrey saw or thought of was Marjorie. She looked prettier than he had ever seen her look, as she moved forward to greet him—softer, more womanly. For the girl, while she chafed, in imagination, under her new yoke, had spent a good hour before her glass ere her lover came. She had put on her one white dress of regulation length, had clasped an old-fashioned Spanish necklace round her throat, had pinned a little bunch of heliotrope and sweetbrier, mindful of the morning's dominant odors, in her breast.

A sense of his immense good fortune in having won her filled Geoffrey Arbuthnot's heart. He took both her hands, looking down at their slender carving, with the connoisseurship of possession. He raised them within an inch of his lips.

"I hope, Mr. Arbuthnot, you will pardon me for receiving you here?" Marjorie asked him this with forced composure. "But I thought—I was not sure whether we were to read to-night or not."

Geoffrey Arbuthnot involuntarily drew back. The glance which met him from his new sweetheart's eyes was, he felt, cold. During an instant's space, mastered by one of those shadowy infidelities of which we repent ere they take substance, Geoff bethought him of eyes that never could look cold, in happiness or in trouble—English-colored eyes from which, perhaps, the fire, the mind of Marjorie's sapphire glance, were wanting.

"I thought," she went on, with almost defiant ease, "that after yesterday's idleness, our reading to-night must be a sham, so it would be unnecessary to see you in the school-room."

"I can guess what that means," said Geoffrey, without letting loose her hands. "You have no work ready for me."

"I have done some Virgil, fuller, I know, of faults than ever, but I thought, for one evening, sir, we might let Greek and Latin go."

"Why not let them go forever—as things that have had their use!" cried Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

"As things that have had their use? Are you speaking of *my* classics? You, who told me, a fortnight ago, I might come out in the third class of a tripos?"

"A fortnight ago is not to-day."

"Your good opinion has had time to cool? Pray be frank, Mr. Arbuthnot." It was in her mood to quarrel—at least, to reach the brink of a quarrel with him, if 'twere only for sweet relenting's sake. "I don't one bit come up to your ideal of a model woman?"

"I abhor models, irrespective of their sex. Marjorie, why are we talking in this strain?" And now her fingers reached his lips. "I want you to be like nothing, to be nothing, but yourself."

"And I, myself, shall never alter. I may be too dull-witted to pass the entrance examination for Girton. That will be my misfortune. I shall always be athirst for knowing things, for seeing life—on its seamy side, especially—with my own eyes, for getting to the real worst of everything! And I shall always," added Marjorie, with a look that indubitably had in it the nature of a challenge, "retain my Bartrand temper."

"I have a temper also," answered Geff, drawing her a little closer to him. "Do not omit that item from our prospects of future joy. You are passionate. I am unforgetting. Stormy elements, these, to be brought into daily, hourly contact under the same roof."

"And has your ideal of life always been one of conflict?" asked Marjorie.

At the domestic picture, quietly touched in by Geoffrey, the lines of her lips had softened against her will.

"I have had no experience save in conflict," answered Geff Arbuthnot, truthfully.

"When you were a really young man, four or five years ago, did you look forward to the 'Taming of a Shrew' as a likely sequel to your term of happy bachelorhood?"

The question was jestingly meant, lightly spoken. But Geoffrey's dark cheek reddened.

"Oh, if I have said anything indiscreet, forgive me." Marjorie watched him with attention. "You must grow used, remember, to the faults of my fine qualities. One of these is inquisitiveness. It would delight me to know, precisely, what you used to think and feel when you were twenty years old. I suppose you were not so preternaturally wise, always, as you are now?"

"I have never been wise at any period of my life," said Geoffrey Arbuthnot.

"But when you were nineteen, say, what did you think, what did you hope, what did you look forward to?"

"What I hoped, what I looked forward to, was—madness,"

The unguarded answer broke from him instantly. "If you would be kind to me, Marjorie," he added, "let the past rest. There is enough, a great deal more than enough, to be grateful for in the present."

Marjorie, on this, drew herself to her full height. She looked at him with the instinct of a child who would unriddle a secret by his own close reading of another's face. She freed her hands abruptly from his clasp.

"What you hoped, what you looked forward to was—madness! Do you mean in regard of University laurels?"

"We are not talking of University laurels. We are talking," said Geff, honestly, "of the happiness beyond happiness, the companionship for life of two human souls that suit each other."

"And your hopes of these things," her lips whitened as she repeated the words, "were madness? Singular contradiction! You have told me that yours has been a secluded student's life, that, until a fortnight ago, you never cared for any society but that of men?"

"Whatever I have told you has been true," said Geff, with firmness. Then, instantly relenting, "Do not let us have a quarrel," he pleaded, "on this first day that we are sweethearts."

She turned from him, indignant, breathless.

"If we quarrel over realities, Mr. Arbuthnot, the pity is we did not look realities in the face before becoming sweethearts."

"Miss Bartrand—Marjorie!"

"Oh, I am thoroughly in earnest. This morning, when first I knew you cared for me a little, I was open with you. I told you what had to be said about Major Tredennis, and you forgave me. Blue-beard secrets, bad always, must be doubly so between people who mean to spend their lives together. I told you of my miserable weakness—"

Her frank girlish face burned so hotly that Geff came to her relief.

"You were very open with me, Marjorie, true and straightforward, as it is your nature to be."

"I did not hide from you, whatever the shame of it, that I had bound myself once before."

Geoffrey was no special diplomatist. He might, otherwise, with mournful veracity, have retorted that he had been a free man always. But the statement would have implied a prevarication, and it was not in Geoffrey Arbuthnot's upright soul to prevaricate.

"You told me you had been engaged. You also gave an opinion as to its being impossible for people, honestly, to love twice."

"Most certainly I did. I never cared more for Major Tredennis than I do for this flower I wear—ask Mrs. Arbuthnot! I found courage yesterday to talk to her about that wretched time—and I ~~do~~ care for you," looking straight from her heart at her lover. "And it is utterly impossible for any woman or any man to love twice."

"You think so? I ought to have disagreed with you at once," struck in Geff, promptly. "I ought to have told you this morning what I hold to be truth."

"And this is?"

"That women and men may love a second time honestly, although once, only, with success."

She turned away doubtfully, with lowered lids, hesitating a few moments. Then: "Love twice? and why not love three, four, five times?" she questioned, looking up at him with a glance of fire. "Why hold at all by constancy, or honor, or good faith? What mystic limitation is there in the number two?"

"A woman troubled is Heaven's fairest work spoiled."

Geoffrey believed as devoutly as do most men in the aphorism. But Marjorie was not a woman, he remembered, only an impetuous girl, with Southern blood in her veins, with the Bartrand pride on her lips, with all sweet and modest and maidenly superstitions in her heart.

He felt that he had never loved her more dearly than in this very outburst of unreasoning childish wrath against himself.

"I know nothing about three, four, or five times. You persisted, recollect, in making me talk of an uninteresting subject, my own past life and—"

"And am I to think—are you putting me to the humiliation, now too late," she exclaimed, the thought of his kiss returning to her, "the humiliation of feeling, here, under my grandfather's roof, that I am offered your love at second-hand?"

A few instants ago Geoffrey's impulse had been to take her in his arms, to forgive her in spite of her injustice! But her tone had changed. It was hard, suspicious. It bespoke pride not only of race but of money. All the inherited baser possibilities of her nature had, under the moment's white anger, gained the ascendancy in poor Marjorie's breast.

Geff was sensible of them and recoiled. For the first time to-day, it occurred to him that the girl he sought to marry was not only a Bartrand but an heiress, his superior in position as in purse,

"I don't like to hear you say 'humiliation.' Such love as I feel for you," confessed Geoffrey Arbuthnot, nobly and simply, "could humiliate no woman."

"And if it comes at second-hand, if some one else before my time has appraised its value, and flung it aside?"

"Miss Bartrand, you must explain to me what you mean by that question."

"I mean," flamed forth Marjorie, her whole angry soul throbbing in her voice, "that I must be first—first, Mr. Arbuthnot, in the heart of the man I marry."

"Would you not be first in mine?"

"I should give him all. I could accept nothing short of all in return. If, afterward, I found that I had been deceived—you understand me, if I knew that I had been chosen from other motives than love—I should make his life and my own most miserable!"

And, indeed, the passion of her voice and face gave to the prophecy only too much an air of certitude.

Geoffrey Arbuthnot walked to a neighboring window. Pushing back the half-closed shutters he saw before him a wide expanse of the manoir gardens; through an arch of cedar bows he caught a goodly vista of fields and orchards beyond. And all that he looked upon would one day be Marjorie's! With crushing force came the conviction that he had fallen into a desperate error, had walked blindfolded, a second time, into a Fool's Paradise. Marjorie Bartrand's youth, the intimacy into which they had been thrown, his own absolute want of premeditation, might be excused. The facts were there, looking, as disagreeable facts have a knack of doing, with transparent clearness in his face. He had walked into a Fool's Paradise. To accept the position, give Marjorie Bartrand back her freedom, unconditionally, were the moment's immediate and exceeding bitter duties. The willful, hot-headed child of seventeen — conquered at one moment, at the next resisting—repented her, already, of her bargain. Let that bargain be cancelled.

"Your life shall never become miserable through fault of mine, Miss Bartrand." Turning round, Geff looked at her gravely. "Pardon me whatever foolish words I spoke this morning. In a week or two forget my existence! You are bound to me by no promise—"

"And it costs you nothing to give me up? You can talk of forgetting, in this airy fashion?" interrupted Marjorie, with vehement recollection of her own surrender. "Then you never scught

me from liking. I have had a second experience of the same cruel story. The acres of Tintajoux, few though they be, are matters, it seems, better worth caring for than Marjorie Bartrand herself."

From her cradle to her grave it would be safe to aver that speech so ignoble never issued from Marjorie Bartrand's lips. She recognized its meanness before the last word was spoken. Her cheeks crimsoned. She could have flung herself at the feet of the lover her suspicion had dishonored.

"I was wrong—forgive me for speaking like this," she began to stammer brokenly.

But Geoffrey Arbuthnot could not condone a paltry accusation, even from her. With two strides he reached the girl's chair. He stood before her, pale and strongly moved. She hardly recognized the expression of his face.

"And so you think that I, with the full use of my muscles and brain, sought to marry you for money's sake, the poor little hand-ful of money that goes with Tintajoux Manoir. The slight to my intelligence is severe. Had I been a fortune-hunter, Miss Bartrand, I should have gone for a larger stake."

"Then why did you look at me? Why did you not let me go my way?" She clasped her hands together, piteously. "For you have never loved me. You confessed as much just now?"

"Did I? I can only remember a confession in which I spoke the truth—a confession you believed this morning," added Geoffrey, with as much steadiness as he could muster.

"All this is waste of time," she said, with a miserable little laugh. "We have the habit of plain speaking—you and I. Let us keep it up to the last. Your heart is not your own, Mr. Arbuthnot. You have liked some other person better than you like me. *Have* liked, did I say? You like her, I have not a doubt, to this day."

"This day when I have asked you, wisely or unwisely, to be my wife?"

"If your conscience were clear you could not trifle with me like this. You would say No, or Yes."

And, thus urged, Geoffrey Arbuthnot said "Yes"—with unmitigated frankness, without a hint either at penitence or remorse. Long ago, in his undergraduate days—thus the confession ran—he had fallen in love—possibly as men do not fall in love, twice, during their lives! He was rough, plain, a student as Marjorie saw him now, no suitor to win a young girl's fancy. And so—

"And so," broke in Marjorie with trembling interest, "she was false to you?"

"She was neither false nor true," he answered; "I had no place at all in her heart. My own best friend"—and here Geff's voice sunk, each word of his avowal seemed wrung from him with pain—"became unconsciously, my rival."

"Your best friend," stammered Marjorie, upon whom a first flicker of light was beginning to dawn.

"Best then, and I hope forever—just as she whom he married will, I know, be my ideal of all sweet and womanly qualities till I die. Although I lost her," exclaimed Geff Arbuthnot. "I owe her everything! It is using a commonplace to say that I would at any hour start to the other side of the world, if by so starting I could confer on her the smallest service. But it is the truth."

He was a man, ordinarily, of demeanor so reticent, of emotions so controlled, that this little outburst struck on Marjorie Bartrand with double force. Alas! there could not be room for another instant's doubt. She recalled the morning when she had lectured her tutor on his frivolity, she remembered his embarrassment when she spoke of Dinah as his wife—his absence of mind, his pallor. The story of his past life was laid open, a clear page, for her to read. The confession of her engagement to Major Tredennis had met with an overfull equivalent.

"At last, then," she murmured, "I have got to the truth of things. It might have been juster if I had not been deceived so long."

"Will you hear me out to the end?" There was a ring of command rather than of pleading in Geoffrey's tone. "Four years ago it was my fate, I can never say my misfortune, to come across a girl whom it was madness for me to love. I lost. I suffered. But many a man has met with a like overthrow, and got firmly to his feet in time. I am very firm on my feet," said Geff Arbuthnot. "I have grown young again in knowing you. If you had chosen to become my wife, I could have loved you well. Yes, I do love you—too well! Now, when it seems we are like bidding good-bye forever."

And Geoffrey rested his hands for an instant upon the girl's graceful down-bent head.

"And the dream is over—over." She repeated the words huskily, not so much thinking of Geff, as seeking to bring home to herself the extremity of her own pain. "We are to be nothing to each other from this hour forth, not even friends,"

Geoffrey Arbuthnot walked a few steps away. The movement was prompted by a definite and conscious weakness. This saying good-bye forever was no easy thing, he found so long as his hand rested upon the silken hair, so long as the slender figure palpitated close to him, the heliotrope sent its odor to his brain from Marjorie's breast.

"The dream is over, because you discovered it to be a dream. You must acknowledge, Miss Bartrand, that you have taken the matter wholly out of my keeping."

"We might see each other as friends," she stammered—true to a time-worn instinct of her sex, offering a stone for bread, friendship to the man she loved, and who loved her. "Surely our work need not be dropped because of this? As long as you stay in the island, you will come out to read with me at Tintajoux?"

"I shall return to Tintajoux, once more, after to-night," was Geff Arbuthnot's answer. "I shall return to shake hands with the seigneur, and to be paid my money. Good-bye forever are hard words to speak," he went on. "But we shall not make the hardness easier by trying to shirk them. We have, virtually, said good-bye already."

"And we are never to be nearer reconciliation than this? You are not a man to change?"

There came a furtive play of feeling upon her mouth. Deep in her heart lurked a formless hope that Geoffrey was not in earnest, that at a smile, a touch of hers, he must yield, if she so willed it.

"I am a man," he answered, "to change upon the day you bid me to do so. If, at some future time, you think less vile things of me—"

"Mr. Arbuthnot!"

"Well, or without that. If it should be your whim, in some idle hour, to remember my existence—dare I say, to send me a flower you have worn, a bit of ribbon, a sheet of paper with a single relenting word written on it—you will have only to address your envelope to St. John's, Cambridge."

"And now, for the remainder of this summer?" asked Marjorie, drear visions rising before her of a silent school-room, of work labored through without the poignant desire of Geoffrey's praise. "Is it possible that you mean—that you have no other course than to leave Guernsey at once?"

Something in her manner made it seem that she referred their quarrel to him for final arbitration. But Geff Arbuthnot tried his utmost to congeal. His present temper indisposed him for compro-

mise. He had been cut to the quick by that one scornful imputation, that one base utterance of Marjorie's lips—"The acres of Tintajoux, few though they be, are matters better worth caring for than Marjorie Bartrand herself."

He felt it impossible to forgive her.

"I shall certainly not leave Guernsey without calling on the seigneur—to be paid."

Geoffrey was not superior to a feeling of pleasure in the repetition of these words. They were horribly cruel ones. It might well be, afterward, that he remembered with remorse how the girl's slender figure drooped, how her cheeks burned, how her hands fell listlessly upon her knee, one in the other's palm.

"And then, for the rest of the vacation, what are your plans?" she repeated, presently.

"I have no plans now. The summer has gone out of my year! May be I shall follow in the footsteps of Gaston and his wife. Dinah, I know, would not be sorry to leave this place."

He spoke without premeditation. It had, perhaps, not occurred to Geff Arbuthnot's coarser masculine perception, that his meager outline of the past had revealed a secret of which Dinah was, herself, ignorant. To Marjorie, in her despair, the mention of Dinah's name was a last blow, the heavier, perhaps, in that Geoffrey gave it with such calmness, was prepared, as a matter of course, to fall back on the friendship of the fair and gentle woman to whom, although she had never loved him, he "owed everything."

"Or I may cross at once to England. That is likeliest. In England, one can always fall back on work. I have had enough of idleness. A boat calls here on Sunday morning that will suit me well enough."

"On Saturday, then, grandpapa and I will look for your visit. Could you not," suggested Marjorie, with magnanimity, "ask Mr. and Mrs. Gaston Arbuthnot to come with you to Tintajoux?"

Geoffrey had a moment's hesitation. There was a note in her fresh and youthful voice which he had never before distinguished, and which, I think, wrung his heart. But he would not allow himself to soften. He would not forgive her until she repented her of the thing which she had uttered.

"Gaston has not returned, Miss Bartrand. There are heavy fog-banks still at sea. The Cherbourg boat was not signaled when I left town, and Dinah—well, Dinah, of course, will be miserable until she sees her husband's face."

Geff took up his hat in readiness for departure, and Marjorie rose from her chair.

"The Cherbourg boat will be back before Saturday, but, in any case, grandpapa and I will count upon seeing *you*. Good-night, Mr. Arbuthnot. This is not your last visit to Tintajeux. I do not acknowledge that we are saying good-bye forever."

She kept herself under singular control. For a second or two she yielded her cold hand, bravely, into Geff's keeping. As he left the drawing-room she accorded him a lofty *minuet de la cour* courtesy, learned, in her babyhood, from her first French governess. Then, when he was gone, when the figure she had watched so often had rounded the last turning in the Tintajeux avenue, the poor child, with leaden steps, made her way to the school-room. Sinking in her place beside the ink-stained table, Marjorie Bartrand rested her face upon a heap of books, then burst into a very thunder-shower of tears.

Her scene with Geoffrey had swept away all sense of the dual personality that troubled her before his coming. The strong-minded Minerva, criticising love and marriage with acerbity, had vanished, and in her place was a commonplace little girl sobbing her heart out, as Rosie Verschoyle, as Ada de Carteret might have done, for the sweetheart her own unruly tongue had estranged.

If Geoffrey would but come back, take her in his arms, kiss and forgive her! So, dumbly, cried Marjorie's heart.

But supper-time came and went. The sun dipped under the fading sea-line, the twilight waned, the yellow stars stole forth, one by one, from the gray: Geoffrey Arbuthnot returned not.

She had acted with family pride, perhaps from virtue, conceivably from jealousy, without doubt, as became a Bartrand. These cold consolations were all that the universe, just at present, seemed likely to offer.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TEMPTATION.

WHEN the Cherbourg boat reached Guernsey, twenty-four hours behind her time, no Dinah, with radiant expectant face, waited on the quay to bid Gaston Arbuthnot good-morning.

It was the first occasion since their marriage that she had in like manner failed. After ever so short a separation it was Dinah's habit to go bravely to the fore on harbor side or platform with a

welcome for the husband she loved. No Dinah was to be seen this morning. And Gaston Arbuthnot's spirit sat more lightly on its throne by reason of her absence.

He was honestly glad to return. A day and a night's detention on a rock, with a thick sea fog, and without one's dressing-case, was a test of sentiment and of friendship alike, which Gaston had felt to be beyond his strength. But it was a relief to him that poor Dinah, effusive, reproachful—Dinah, half sunshine, half tears—should not be on the pier to enact a little scene of domestic interest beneath the sharp, uncomprehending eyes of Linda Thorne.

"Useless to ask you to breakfast with us," murmured that lady, from beneath her treble gauze mask, as she and Gaston were passing across the gangway. "Dear Mrs. Arbuthnot, I am sure, will be in a fever of anxiety about your return."

"Scarcely. Every one in Guernsey must have known that fog detained us. If you will be at home this afternoon," Gaston added, when their hands met at parting, "I will give you the latest bulletin as to Dinah's condition."

"Oh, I make no promises," cried Linda, carelessly. "He who will not when he may"—you know the rest of the proverb. Long before five o'clock to-day some tragic event may have changed us"—in after times this prophecy, made in jest, might possibly return to Linda Thorne's memory—"changed us forever into enemies. Robbie, love, accept my arm. As you are quite determined that two shillings' worth of cab would bring us to bankruptcy, we will return to our home and infant on foot."

Doctor and Mrs. Thorne turned, on leaving the quay, into a narrow street leading toward the Old Town and the Bungalow. Gaston Arbuthnot, with the light-heartedness born of recovered freedom, ran quickly up the hundred-and-eighty steps that formed the shortest cut from the pier road to Miller's Hotel. At the summit of these steps a new temptation assailed him in the person of old Colonel de Gourmet, the bachelor proprietor of the most luxurious little house, the best cellar, and the best cook in the Channel Archipelago.

"Why, Arbuthnot! Some one told me you were at the bottom of the sea. You and Linda Thorne. Locksley Hall sort of thing! So goes the story of the moment. You are the very man I could have wished to meet, sir. Come back to breakfast with me. I have two of the finest mullet ever caught in this Channel, and Kutscheel, my black fellow, could dress a mullet with Brillat Savarin himself. Now, I'll hear of no refusal."

"I have a wife, colonel. The argument, naturally, does not carry weight with you. Still it is an argument; I have a wife, and she expects me."

"Send up a line from my house telling Mrs. Arbuthnot where you are. I positively wouldn't waste such fish on a man of less cultivated taste." In the colonel's lackluster eye there came a momentary glow of feeling. "In my time, we used to look upon a palate—a *palate*, sir, as one of the essentials of a gentleman. The young men nowadays don't know a mullet from a stickleback."

Well, reader, a dual breakfast with old De Gourmet was a temptation, after its sort, that Gaston Arbuthnot ranked high. The colonel's admirably arranged house was screened by just sufficient leafy shadow from the eastern sun, refreshed by just sufficient air on the side where it opened to the sea. The colonel's black fellow was a finished artist; his cellar the long result of half a life-time. To Gaston—true Parisian in all the more important business of existence—a noontide breakfast was the crowning meal of the day. Man dines, he would contend, as dogs or horses feed, because his body needs replenishment. Breakfast, with its delicate light dishes, fine wine, fruits and coffee—breakfast succeeded by a prime cigar, morning sunshine, and morning talk—is, essentially, a refined, a human repast. The nine o'clock tea and toast, the marmalade, bloaters, or bacon, sacred to the British householder, were scarcely less horrible to him than the buckwheat cakes and maple sirup, the porridge, the pie, the "shad" of American breakfast-tables.

"If you can give me half an hour's law, Colonel de Gourmet, time to have a bath, to get a change of apparel, and hear my wife's version of the Locksley Hall episode, I will come to you. Otherwise, I know the nature of mullet, and—"

"I appreciate your delicacy, my dear sir. But my black fellow and I thoroughly understand each other. Those mullet," said the colonel, with a quiver of the lips, "are now reposing, each in its paper shroud, buttered, flavored to a nicety. They will not approach the fire until Kutscheel sees me turn yonder corner beneath the Arsenal gates. I will wait for you here—putting the last finishing touch, alas! to a poorish appetite—as I limp up and down in the shade. But don't exceed thirty-five minutes. We owe it to our cook, a human being with passions and weaknesses like unto our own, to have a conscience in these matters."

A minute or two later, Gaston's alert step had brought him to the outer gate of Miller's Hotel. He loitered for a few seconds in the garden, enjoying its double sensation of warmth and flower

scents. Then, with hesitation for which he would have found it hard to account, Gaston Arbuthnot entered the house. He traversed a passage, and opened the door of Dinah's sitting-room.

It was empty. Her work-frame was shrouded in silver paper. A bouquet of hot-house flowers lay, with petals browned and faded, on the table, a card of Lord Rex Basire's beside them. Gaston felt that the room had not been lived in since they left it last on Wednesday morning.

"Madame had gone out," volunteered the black-eyed French waitress, peeping in at him through the half-open door, the black-eyed waitress building up dramatic likelihoods on the spot—possibly from the recollection of madame's tears of yesterday; possibly from milor's neglected bouquet on the table; possibly from a certain blank look on Arbuthnot's face. "Madame had gone out—there was a good hour at least. Madame had left no message for monsieur."

For the first time since their marriage, thought Gaston Arbuthnot, not without a pang, as he walked off in silence to his dressing-room!

Well, there must be a first time, he supposed, in all one's disillusionments. From to-day forth, he need never more expect a passionate greeting, perhaps never dread a passionate reproach from Dinah. And it was best so. Gaston had seen Clesinger's rival statues of Rachel: one, the "Phèdre," the other, "Lesbia with her Sparrow." He infinitely preferred the Lesbia, sparrow, silliness, and all. Still, mused Mr. Arbuthnot, whose emotions had a trick of mounting quickly from the heart to the head, it might be a little stroke of wise and kindly diplomacy for him to exhibit discerning mortification, make Dinah feel that she had been forgetful of him.

Forgetful! For the first time, surely, since that morning in the rustic Cambridgeshire church when she walked down the aisle, in her white straw bonnet, her simple cambric gown—his wife.

Accordingly, when he re-entered their sitting-room presently—Dinah absent still—Mr. Arbuthnot penciled the following note, curtly amative, as was ever one of Captain Steele's to his Prue!

"MY DEAREST GIRL,—My existence, I perceive, has slipped your memory. But I do exist. I am, at this moment, going out to breakfast—not in high spirits.

"Your devoted

"G. A."

Gaston Arbuthnot penciled this note. Then, with affections, it must be confessed, undividedly centered on red mullet, he started off, lightsome of mien, elastic of step, in the direction of Colonel de

Gourmet's house. At the first turning of the road a girl with golden hair, with a face fair, despite its pallor, as the summer morning, stood opposite to him—Dinah. A basket of strawberries hung on Mrs. Arbuthnot's arm, a bunch of white moss-roses, her husband's favorite flower, was between her hands.

"Dinah, my love, this is fortunate. I have been hunting everywhere for you," said Gaston, hitting without effort upon one of those airy little nothings which float men of his weight, like corks, over half the whirlpools of life.

"I am glad, in spite of all that has happened, to see you back."

And Dinah, who had never uttered an airy nothing since she was born, looked hard at him. Traces, unmistakable, of tear-shedding gave an expression Gaston Arbuthnot liked not to her eyes.

"Yet you did not show your gladness by meeting me on the pier—grim and dirty objects we must all have been after our twenty-four hours' discomfort! Perhaps I deserved to be neglected," said Gaston, in a tone of resignation. "But remember, darling, I am not accustomed to miss your face when I have been away. The punishment, coming immediately after a course of Alderney and fog, struck me as rough."

"Don't talk of punishment," Dinah answered, her voice betraying the strong effort by which she kept it controlled. "Your staying away has been hard to bear—and now, now I wish to forget everything but that you are back safe."

"And what did you do with your time, yesterday? Of course you were not anxious. You knew that fog, and fog alone, was keeping me in Alderney."

"Yesterday was the blackest day I have ever lived through."

And Dinah lifted her face, courting rather than turning from her husband's scrutiny.

"Blackest? Why, I thought you had had sunshine in Guernsey, that the fog concentrated itself with vile partiality upon our horrible rock yonder! And what did you do with your time?" went on Gaston, with unabated cheerfulness. "Where was Geoffrey?"

"I did not think of Geoffrey. I had heart for nothing but to stay in my own room."

"Substituting tea for dinner, close air for oxygen, as Woman loves to do when she is in trouble—or has manufactured trouble for herself. And had you no visitors at all to lighten your darkness?"

"Lord Rex Basire seems to have called. His card was lying this morning on the parlor table."

"And you have no wider sympathies, Dinah, no desire to know how we, miserable deserters, got along in Alderney?"

"I like, of course, to hear everything that concerns you."

Dinah accentuated the pronoun stoutly.

"Although you had not sufficient curiosity to meet me when I landed?"

As Gaston thus adroitly harked back upon his grievance his wife's eyes sunk. She turned from him with a movement of impatience.

"The moment the steamer was signaled I got ready, Gaston. I went straight down to the pier road and watched her come into harbor. Oh, you never saw me," Dinah added quickly. "I was standing behind some piles of timber at the entrance to the pier, a hundred yards distant. And when I saw you and the Thornes land together, I felt certain you would walk with them to their house, and I lost courage and got away."

"To avoid the deadly risk of saying good-morning to Mrs. Thorne and the doctor?"

"I—I remembered there were no strawberries for breakfast," she stammered, determined upon not giving him fresh offense, "no roses to last us until to-morrow. Don't you see," holding out her hands, which trembled a little, "I have been marketing?"

"Alone? But I need hardly ask the question. You always do your marketing alone."

His skillfully marshaled questions perplexed her vaguely. She felt the same aching doubt which overcame her, once, on board the "Princess," a doubt as to Gaston's belief in her perfect truthfulness.

"Yes, and no," she answered, a piteous deprecation in her tone. "Lord Rex Basire was in the market-place. His company was so wearisome that I could scarcely answer a civil word. Yet he followed me from stall to stall. A lord it seems will not be affronted as a gentleman would. I never shook him off till I turned the corner beneath the Arsenal gates."

"From which point Lord Rex no doubt caught a glimpse of me," said Gaston with his unfathomable candor. "'Tis a good enough little creature in its way, although brainless! We must be tolerant of all men, Dinah. If one only frequented the society one loves best," he pursued, "I should certainly not be going out to breakfast at this moment."

"Going out!"

"I saw De Gourmet at the bottom of the hill, and he invited me

to eat red mullet with him thirty-five minutes later. You must admit, Dinah, that the temptation was strong."

To this she made no answer.

"For when De Gourmet talks of red mullet he implies a menu. (Our food in Alderney was barbarous.) Rougets en papillottes, accompanied by fine old graves. Tartines de caviar. Poulet sauté—with Château Margaux, of '58. A soufflé aux fraises. A glass of wonderful Tokai after one's morsel of Stilton! Still," added Gaston, "if you had met me on the pier I could never have said Yes—especially as I am obliged to dine at the Fort to-night."

Again Dinah was mute. She rested her hand upon the garden railing beside which they stood. She kept the tears back, bravely, in their bed.

"It is guest night at the mess, and there will be a larger party than usual. My engagement dates, really, from a week ago. I made some idle promise, it seems, of giving the Miltshire youngsters a lesson in poker. By the bye," ran on Mr. Arbuthnot, with an air of spontaneous reminiscence, "I remember! Little Oscar Jones offered to put me up. Very lucky I thought of telling you."

"You intend to be away till to-morrow? Is that your meaning, Gaston?"

"Till to-morrow, certainly. When can one get away from a mess-dinner before midnight? This time, however, you will not be disturbed, my love. Instead of being roused at an unearthly hour of the morning, you will have your rest unbroken. And you want it, Dinah. Do you know that you are losing your color, that your eyes are beginning to look dark under the lower lid?"

"And your evening dress? When you breakfast with Colonel de Gourmet, I generally see nothing of you for the remainder of the day."

"My dearest girl, you are all thoughtfulness. Just put together what I shall want in my Gladstone. Miller will see that it goes up to the Fort. And do not keep in your room, Dinah, and do eat dinner, instead of drinking tea, for my sake."

By this time Gaston Arbuthnot had progressed some paces along the descending path. Dinah had no choice but to return to the hotel, then settle down, after a scarcely tasted breakfast, to one of her accustomed days of loneliness and embroidery.

Alas! the mere mechanical business of cross-stitch irritated her cruelly. This conscientious sorting of colored wools, this rigid counting of threads, this hour-long stabbing of a needle in and out

of canvas—what good could be the outcome of it? She asked herself the question ere her needle had taken a dozen stitches. What ill has been lessened, thought Dinah, what pleasure added to mortal lot by all the collective pieces of wool-work which patient, dull-hearted women have executed since the world began?

A keen, eager soul like Marjorie Bartrand's would have settled the question, unhelped, and finally, at about the age of eleven. Dinah's nature was essentially averse to revolution. She was slow at imagining new futures, and an existence without cross stitch would, to her, have been the newest of all possible existences. But pain was beginning to sting her, not only into rebellion, but into quickened intelligence. It was not merely the emptiness of wool-work as an occupation that overcame her. She felt humiliated by its want of art. She pictured the tasteless adornment of Aunt Susan's humble parlor rendered a few shades more tasteless by the added pinks and greens and reds of her own laborious ottoman! She divined, as she had never done before, what her "pieces" must seem like in the fastidious sight of Gaston and of his friends.

With a sensation of disgust poor Dina pinned a screen of silver paper over her forget-me-nots and auriculas. Then she took Geoffrey's volume of Browning from the table. Seating herself in a corner of the room furthest away from the fresh air, the enlivening summer odors and warmth which floated in from the garden, she began to read.

The book opened at "James Lee's Wife."

During the past twenty-four hours she had pondered deeply over the wisdom to be gained at the hands of polite society. What was the Langrune expedition for her but an experiment, a lesson whereby she might acquire the manners, the temper, the ideas (if such existed), of her husband's world! The experiment had taught her much. Yet, I think, "James Lee's Wife," read and re-read, through tears, had taught her more. She had discovered no transcendental meaning, as a learned Browning Society might have done, in Browning's words. But she was growing to look at life otherwise than by her own small rushlight of personal experience, to know that it was no new thing for a man's fancy to die while his wife's love burned at white heat, to realize that there was a wide world lying outside her own narrow imblistered lot—a world to whose beauty and whose teachings the most self-engrossed soul must open itself or perish.

Dinah Arbuthnot did not want to perish. She could be content, he thought, although delight was gone out of her days, if use sur-

vived; ready to spin the wool and bake the bread; to return to the plan, sweet wholesomeness of work-a-day existence from which the hapless good fortune of marrying a gentleman had divorced her.

To part from Gaston; in short!

For an instant she had a physical longing to breathe the air of the Devonshire moorlands. A wild hope crossed her that she might go back to her father's people, live their village lives, earn her own bread—be Dinah Thurston again. Then her heart smote her with violence. The volume fell to the floor. Could parting from Gaston be a beginning of better things, a turning toward the straight path of duty—that path along which so many a wife has to walk, uncomplaining, through the after years of a marriage to which happiness has not been granted? Her existence at his side was more, now, than a long, slow disappointment. It was a growing anguish, a combat in which ignorant, plain-speaking love on one side had no chance against a succession of sympathetic rivals all uttering perfect little flatteries, all giving perfect little dinners, on the other. And she, Dinah, was not two-and-twenty, and her young heart craved, insistently, for sunshine. And such a slender change, it seemed, in the eternal fore-ordering of events, a child at her knee, a husband loving the quiet of his own fireside, would have made up the sum of her prosaic ambition!

Yet she must go on enduring. She must not part from Gaston until the dark final curtain shut his face forever from her sight. What taste could she have for the Devonshire moorlands, the country joys which contented her when she was a girl? No human soul can serve two masters. After knowing passionate love, passionate jealousy, how could she go back to a life of no emotion at all, how share the village interests of people like her father's folk; simple souls with whom it was a vital point whether the next cake should be made with caraways or with raisins, who could speculate through half a winter as to who would be "asked," and who wear new bonnets on Easter Sunday, and in whose minds a visit to Exeter, or the yearly house-cleaning, ranked among the larger events of mortal destiny?

The poor girl was reluctantly coming to the conclusion—a hard one to realize at her age—that she would not be extraordinarily welcome anywhere, when Geoff Arbuthnot, unannounced, as was his habit, entered the parlor.

He took in the position of affairs, promptly. Dinah's colorless face, her unoccupied hands, the book lying, as it had fallen, on the

floor, told him, with gist passing that of words, that she was in some fresh misery of which Gaston was the cause.

Geoffrey's own heart was sore, his spirit troubled, to-day. A thought distantly akin to that which had newly traversed Dinah's mind for a moment overcame him. What a little change in the foreordering of things might have rewritten the story of both lives! If Dinah Thurston had chanced to love him before his cousin Gaston crossed her path—

"Alone—and in-doors, Dinah?" Her Christian name for once slipped from his lips. "It is a day," quoted Geff, "'when it were a sullenness against Nature not to go abroad and see her riches.' Has Gaston returned?"

"Gaston and the Thornes have returned. The Cherbourg boat came in, long ago. And I have been out—I went down to market before breakfast. I enjoyed the morning wonderfully."

There was the kind of discrepancy between voice and statement that you might detect in the speech of a man who should declare he had "wonderfully enjoyed" a funeral.

"And what are you going to do with yourself this afternoon?"

"I scarcely know—I am in an idle mood—write to one of the good old aunts in Devonshire, perhaps."

"And Gaston?"

"Gaston will not be seen till to-morrow. He has, in the first place, gone out to breakfast. I was not on the pier when they landed, and Gaston ran quickly up here to dress. I only spoke to him for a few minutes outside the hotel. Colonel de Gourmet had waylaid him on the road, it seems, and invited him to breakfast—off red mullet! The temptation, Gaston said, was irresistible."

A touch of sarcasm was in Mrs. Arbuthnot's voice.

"The Guernsey red mullet is not a bad fish," retorted Geff with appreciation.

"Breakfasting, of course, means spending the day at Colonel de Gourmet's house—until the hour comes round for afternoon teas! And to-night there is a dinner-party at the fort. Gaston is forced to be there—to give some of the Maltshire subalterns a lesson in poker. He will not be back till to-morrow, quite out of consideration for me! Gaston thought me looking pale. He did not wish me to have another broken night."

The speech was delivered with a kind of staccato airiness. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's face became graver and graver while Dinah made it.

"You are reading, I see, as usual. Why, you will be a confirmed book-worm before long."

Coming closer, he picked up the volume from the floor. He examined the page at which it opened.

"'James Lee's Wife;' I should say you would soon know Mrs. Lee's history by heart."

"I find something new in it, always. Don't you think, Geff, so much writing must have gone far to ease her sorrow? Or would writing just come natural to an educated, born lady? In my class," said Dinah, "if trouble cut us very keen, we should not feel like taking a copy-book to write it down."

The criticism, from Dinah's point of view, was just. Geff sought not to contravert it.

"The prettiest part of all is 'Beside the drawing-board.' I was thinking, before you came in, I'd rather be the little girl with the poor coarse hand than write the best poetry ever printed."

Geoffrey followed the drift of her remark.

"And Gaston?" he asked with point. "How about his opinion? We can not look at a single small morsel of our lot, forgetting the rest. If there is one thing Gaston admires more than another in a woman, it is the whiteness and delicacy of her hand."

"All the same, Geff, I hate to live without work, common household work that makes the hands rough and red. Work is the same to me as your books are to you. And you know," added Dinah, "there must always be a world full of ladies, delicate, white-skinned, fond of idleness, whose finger-tips Gaston could admire."

The observation gave Geff an inconveniently straight glimpse behind the domestic curtain of his friends' lives. Moving to the table he became suddenly interested in Dinah's marketing—the strawberries were in their wicker basket still; the roses hung their heads, as though conscious of neglect, over the rim of an ugly water-jug.

You may, generally, prognosticate safely as to the state of a woman's heart when she treats her flowers lovelessly.

"They were all for Gaston. You know how he likes to see fresh fruit and flowers on the breakfast-table."

"I know that the strawberries smell uncommonly good. They are to be kept, of course, for Gaston's return?"

"Oh, no," Dinah's voice was blankly indifferent. "I don't care now what becomes of them."

"You would do well to care!" exclaimed Geoffrey, looking round on her, shortly. "There are a good many millions of people in the world, remember, besides Gaston Arbuthnot."

"Geoffrey!"

"Yes, a good many millions, the majority of them poor, an enormous percentage—suffering. Gaston and you, and I, are surfeited with good things. We are certain every day we live that we shall dine—think of that, Mrs. Arbuthnot, *dine*, with the accompaniment of as many strawberries and roses as we choose to buy."

The blood mantled hot over Dinah Arbuthnot's weary face.

"You mean to remind me that I am selfish?" she said, very low. "I know it, Geoffrey. I know that I am selfish," she said, very low. "I know it, Geoffrey. I know that I am sinking fast into everything that is bad."

"In the common meaning of the words, you are the least selfish woman living. But you are self-absorbed—no, even that is saying too much—you are Gaston, absorbed. If you could see how some half-starved people manage to get along—yes, and to be cheerful over their crust—you might think less of strawberries and roses for Gaston's breakfast-table."

The admonition looks rougher, set down in black and white, than it sounded. Dinah's face grew animated.

"I know that to be useful in any way would do me good. Long ago I should have liked district-visiting in England, only you see"—hesitating—"we never stop long enough to explain—I mean, for the clergyman of the place quite to know about one."

Her tone was tentative. She had an uneasy dread that young women who marry men above them in rank are likely, if "unexplained," to be suspect in orthodox eyes. In their early married days she recollected a visit paid to them by a sea-side curate with a subscription-list, recollected the sea-side curate's glance when Gaston introduced her, with her country speech and manners, as "my wife."

And Dinah's being the order of mind that generalizes, forever after, from one experience, that glance haunted her still, an uncomfortable reminder as to the likely sentiments of the clergy at large regarding herself.

"Not long enough to explain! I don't catch your meaning. What on earth has any clergyman in England to do with you, Dinah Arbuthnot? Could you not feel for miserable people, work for them, serve them heartily, although you traveled round the country, a beathen, in a caravan, although you had never spoken to a clergyman in your life?"

"I want some one to show me the way—that is another weakness

of my character—I want some one to show me the way in everything good, Geff.”

“Let me show you the way, to-day. You remember the sailor lad who got his ankle hurt as we were coming back from France?”

That wretched passage in the fog? Yes, Dinah remembered every incident of it, too well.

“There was worse mischief done than the surgeons feared, at first. Poor Jack is at present Number 28 in the accident ward of the hospital. He will have to remain there a good many more weeks than he thinks for. Well, one may safely assert, Mrs. Arbuthnot, that though you and I and Gaston have roses and strawberries to spare, Jack has none.”

“Take them to him, of course,” Dinah exclaimed. “Surely, Geff, you might have done that, without asking.”

“And do you suppose Jack would not value such gifts more if they came from a woman’s hand, the delicate white hand whose uses you despise? To-day is Friday. On Friday afternoon the patients’ friends are admitted to see them. But Jack’s friends are far away in Devonshire. You will be his only visitor if you consent to come.”

Dinah rose, acquiescently, rather than with any initiative warmth. She had a moment’s hesitation. Gaston held such contradictory opinions, at times. No knowing if Gaston would approve of her putting herself forward. There was the archdeaconess—there were the island clergy! Then, encountering a look that had a command in it from Geoffrey’s eyes, she moved lingeringly toward the adjoining room.

“If I dressed to please myself, you need not wait two minutes, Geff. But the powers that be,” the little malice flashed from her unawares, “are sensitive—as to millinery! I could not run the terrible risk of meeting Mrs. Thorne and Gaston in my morning gown.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THAT LITTLE DIVINITY.

THE project roused her, at least, into physical brightness. As she walked at Geoffrey’s side toward the hospital, the basket of strawberries hanging from her arm, her hands filled with roses, a stranger, meeting them, would have taken Dinah Arbuthnot for some April-checked girl, ignorant of passion as of disappointment; a girl needing no apologist! She wore, on this fateful afternoon,

a dove-colored Quaker gown, a Gainsborough hat tied beneath her chin by black velvet strings; *item*, a large plain cambric tippet, with cambric half sleeves reaching to the elbows. It was the latest costume invented by her husband in an idle moment. And Geoffrey had lost exactly half-an-hour while she put it on.

But what man would grudge a lost half-hour after one glance at that for which he had waited!

The road from Miller's Hotel to the hospital led through Petersport High Street, and close to the north entrance of Colonel de Gcourmet's garden. At the moment when Dinah and Geff walked along, it chanced that the colonel, himself reclined under the shaded veranda of his drawing-room—the colonel, smoking his third cheroot, and offering unsentimental criticisms on the dress and looks of such feminine passers-by as came within range of a pair of languidly held opera-glasses.

Of an afternoon Colonel de Gourmet's drawing-room was generally full. Lacking many, let us say lacking all the more solid human qualities, the old East Indian sybarite had one virtue—he was universally hospitable. Nothing pleased him better than that a man he had invited to breakfast should loiter on till dinner. Nothing pleased him better than that other men whom he had not invited should drop in, at any hour they chose, make free with his rare cigars, rarer wines, and entertain each other with ideas, or with that best discovered substitute for the trivial masculine mind—cards.

In a garrison town, sea on three sides, and barely available space on the other for a polo match or a herring run, it may be believed that old Colonel de Gourmet was in no lack of callers.

Six or eight men, young enough, most of them, to be their host's grandsons, were lounging, this July afternoon, in various attitudes of idleness about his pleasant bachelor drawing-room. The air was lightly impregnated with tobacco smoke, so good of its kind, that, mingled with the wafted garden sweets, it scarcely seemed grosser than some finely distilled odor of musk-flower or of tea-rose. Gaston Arbuthnot was on the point of finishing a match at écarté with little Oscar Jones—two or three of Oscar's brother officers forming a silent and discriminative gallery.

Cards, simply as cards, Gaston Arbuthnot disliked, although he had an inborn knack of playing most things successfully. The childish intricacies of a game like Nap, beloved of all the Maltshire subalterns, were to him a weariness of spirit.

"We can use your English Nap as a means," he would tell them,

frankly, "just as we can use blind hookey or, simpler than either, chicken hazard, if we want to transfer money from one man's pocket to another. As a matter of amusement, I would sooner play euchre or poker for counters; in poker especially, all our natural human instincts—bluster, bluffing, intent to deceive, etc.—come agreeably to the fore."

Whist, Gaston confessed, he played well. At écarté he was moderately good. This moderate goodness his antagonist was about to test practically.

"Four, all!" cried little Oscar, eager over a just-dealt, brilliant hand of trumps.

"The king," said Gaston, quietly laying down his cards. "Some one tell De Gourmet it is his turn to cut in."

The colonel had now risen to his feet. He was watching an object, evidently of paramount interest, through his opera-glasses.

"A throat—an ankle—shoulders! Tell you what it is, sir—she is the prettiest woman in the island—not one of our society beauties can hold a candle to her! And she's not a woman one meets at any of the parties. By and by, Arbuthnot, by and by." For Gaston, with a presentiment of the truth, sat, restlessly, shuffling and reshuffling the cards. "To view the Queen of Hearts in flesh and blood is better, surely, than handling her in pasteboard. Now, where did one see that little divinity before? At Saturday's rose-show, of course. Asked Linda Thorne about her. Mrs. Linda—true type of the sex—affected not to know her name. Luckily, such a paragon does not need a name. An archdeaconess, if I mistake not, threw her little pebble: 'The young person with the yellow hair was—nobody one knew.'"

Every man in the room, with the exception of Arbuthnot, had by this time crowded to the window. One of the youngsters hazarded a bold whisper in the host's ear. It was old De Gourmet's deader ear. He caught the note of warning imperfectly. He resumed his parable with warmth:

"Frenchwoman, do you say? Can not believe it, sir. No Frenchwoman had ever such a complexion, such hair. But the dress, with its complex simplicity, comes from Paris, doubtless. Dove-colored mousseline de laine." The colonel made these things as much a study as his Brillat Savarin. "A tippet, designedly plain, such as Perfection, only, dare put on. A little black velvet knot beneath the dainty chin. (Directly, Arbuthnot, directly—calm your impatience.) And look at her teeth, now she smiles,

and her dimples! The young fellow with her seems disposed to make the best of his opportunities—small blame to him!"

Throughout the listeners there ran a flash of hideous silence. At last some one passed a slip of paper, on which a name had been hastily scribbled, into Colonel de Gourmet's gouty fingers, and then arose general conversation, mainly as to the weather prospects. After this fog that had been hanging about the Channel for days, and with the glass running down fast, what were the chances we should not have a thunder-storm in the course of the next twenty-four hours?

Gaston Arbuthnot arranged the cards in two neat packs on the table and waited silently for his host. He felt morally certain that the little divinity was his wife, also that Lord Rex Basire was her companion. And a wholesome bitter contrition filled his soul, a feeling widely differing from the vague dæmoniac with which he had watched her teaching Basire cross-stitch five days before. Probably he never knew how dear Dinah's white name was to him, never realized how culpably he had left her in the shade, until this moment's humiliation.

And still Gaston's countenance betrayed him not. An instant later he was rallying the colonel on his boyish enthusiasm, confessing that, for his own part, he was too staid a Benedick to exert himself, at the present state of the thermometer, merely because a nice-looking woman happened to pass along the street.

"And what are our stakes—the usual fiver?" asked De Gourmet, looking immensely tickled as he hobbled across the room to the card-table. "I am afraid of you though, Arbuthnot! You are just the man to be in luck."

"I don't believe in luck. Conduct is fate." Gaston lifted his handsome face. He fixed his clear steady glance on the somewhat Silenus features over against him. "Champagne?—I thank you, colonel. No brain-enemy, just at present. Don't you know that we Yankees keep our heads cool—"

"On purpose to rook the Britishers," interrupted De Gourmet, still with a suppressed chuckle in his voice.

"On purpose to rook the Britishers. Now, let us attend to business, sir," said Gaston, cheerfully. "The best of three games for a five-pound note—good!"

The little divinity and her companion had by this time reached the hospital gates.

"I hope I shall use the proper words, Geff," whispered Dinah,

looking flushed and nervous. "The kind of *exhortation*, you know, that clergymen's wives would give to sick people."

"Impossible!" Geoffrey disencouraged her promptly. "Orthodoxy can not be learned at a moment's notice. You must be content to be—yourself! And that is much," he added, watching her beautiful, earnest face. "Your sermon may well be a silent one. Look, just as you are looking at this moment, and leave the rest to the patient's human nature. Jack may be a miserable sinner, needing homilies. That is a fact you and I have no certitude about. We know that he is a poor lad, far from his people, laid low in pain and weakness. Depend upon it, the sound of a tender voice, the sight of Dinah Arbuthnot's face, must prove good medicine, both for his soul and body."

The tears started to Dinah's eye. She was just at that tension point of suppressed emotion when a kindly accent, a word or two of praise, are as hands extended to a drowning man. If Gaston only esteemed her poor personal gifts as Geoffrey did—for, of whatever she thought, to-day, Gaston still was beneath the current of her thinking! Nay (this followed by a descending, yet inevitable sequence of ideas), if Gaston could only hold the opinion of her held—Dinah, remembering events, had a little thrill of shame—by a man like Lord Rex Basire.

Perhaps the sum-total of yoked infelicity might be lessened if careless husbands would reckon with themselves, sometimes, concerning the number of their deserved rivals—such husbands, I mean, as possess wives of Dinah Arbuthnot's mold. For must not the answer be trumpet-tongued, "The whole seeing world"? Does not every man, save the purblind, range himself by intuition on the side of a young and beautiful and neglected woman? But careless husbands may not have imagination enough for such a stretch, or there may be sympathizers—outside feminine judges—mature sirens—a clever whisper, even, now and then. And so the wife's heart continues to ache to the last—or gives up aching of a sudden; deeper tragedy, by far.

Dinah's color went and came as she traversed the corridors of the hospital beside Geoffrey. The moment they entered Ward A, the men's accident room, she forgot her want of knowledge, of orthodoxy. "Explanation" was not needed here. She saw only the rows of beds, each bed with its pallid inmate. She felt only that she was Dinah Thurston among the poor, the simple, the suffering—among her equals.

The patients in the ward were mostly working-men in the spring-

time of their strength, the majority of them victims of the late quarry accident. A few, like poor Jack, had been struck down by mishap at sea or in the harbor. Beside nearly every bed was a visitor. Here might be seen a country girl talking in whispers to her sweetheart. Here a pale wife clasped her husband's hand, or a mother in silent anguish watched her lad's changed face. On every pillow was a little posy of sweet-smelling cottage flowers, reminding the gaunt sufferers who lay there, patient and uncomplaining, of blue summer sky, of the freshness of fields and gardens, of home.

Number 28 had neither visitor nor posy. Poor Jack came from a remote hamlet among the Devonshire moors. His mates on board the "Princess" were afloat again. The lad had no friends, save the surgeons and nurses of the Guernsey hospital—and Geff Arbutnot.

"Speak to him about his own country," Geoffrey whispered, as his companion, drew back a little; "Jack will dispense with any formal introduction."

And on this, Dinah, her face overflowing with sweetest womanly compassion, stooped over the low pallet and spoke a commonplace word or two, unworthy of raising to the dignity of print—a word or two whose homely Devonshire lilt called the blood up to Jack's temples as though some voice from the old familiar home addressed him.

Since her marriage, Dinah had learned to speak English, "with a foreign pronunciation," Gaston would tell her, "yet scarcely strong enough to be disagreeable." Although a certain cadence was traceable, ever and again, in her speech, she had tardily succeeded in putting away the Devonshire burr that was strong on her tongue when Geoffrey met her first. Here, at Jack's bedside, no Gaston near to be put to shame, she fell back, instinctively, upon the West Country accent, the soft, half-strange, half-familiar o's and u's of her childhood.

"It's so bad to be sick, for a young fellow like you, and away from home. We just thought you might like a talk with some one Devonshire born and bred. I wonder, now, do you and I come from the same part?"

"I was born at Torrhill, a village out away beyond Chagford. A poor place, ma'am, on the borders of the moor—quite a poor place," repeated Jack apologetically.

"Why, that is near to my own town, Tavistock!" said Dinah. "We used to pass Torrhill going along the Vale of Widdicombe

every autumn when we went out whortle-berrying. 'Torrhill, in the cold country.' I mind we children used to say, when we got snowstorms in winter, 'the Wladicombe folk were picking their geese.'"

Well, and as he listened to her simple talk, to the soft West Country accent, it came to pass that Geff Arbuthnot's heart knew a thrill of its old infatuation. No man can possibly hold two women dear at the same time. And Geoffrey was in love—the warm flesh-and-blood love of four and-twenty—with an actuality, not a remembrance. But his heart thrilled at Dinah's voice. Something in his temperament forbade him to outlive the past, wholly. It was a book that could not be clasped. A word, an accent, and the enchantment cast upon him in the long dead summer days at Lesser Cheriton would be revitalized. This was his weakness (a conscious one) always; and now he was in the dangerous state of wounded feeling when a man's tenderness is easily arrested at rebound.

Those Devonshire o's and u's brought back before him in its fiery ardor the fortnight when he worshiped Dinah Thurston's footsteps, the fortnight ending on that evening when Gaston and his friends drove past in the twilight on their return from Ely. Standing here, in the Guernsey hospital ward, Geoffrey's senses recalled the rush of wheels down the village street, the lingering daylight in the low fields of Cambridgeshire sky. He remembered how Dinah's head and throat stood out in waxen relief against the dusky arbutus hedge of the cottage garden.

And he decided, there and then—yes, while she was chatting, low-voiced, smiling, to the lad about the moors, and the "cold country," and the autumn huckle-berrying—to return to England forthwith.

A French steamer was to touch at Petersport on Sunday morning. That would give him to-morrow for winding up his small affairs, for taking leave of his patients, for visiting Tintajoux. He would kiss, in coldest fancy, the hair, the lips that should have made up to him for the unattainable heaven of his youth's desire. He would look once again in Marjorie's eyes, and go. It was possible—here, at least, might be a gleam of comfort—that Gaston and Dinah would steer clearer through their difficulties if left absolutely alone than they were doing now.

He told her of his intention when they were on their way back to the hotel.

"And, remember, you know your way to the hospital," he added

quickly, as Dinah was about to speak. "I hope when I am gone you will pay Jack many a kind little visit, your hands as full of fruits and flowers as they were to-day."

"When you are gone!" echoed Dinah, blankly. The fear smote her that with Geoffrey's going such slack hold as she still had upon Gaston must be loosened. "I hoped you would remain here—as long, at least, as I must. Think of all the sick people who will miss you, Geff. Think of Miss Bartrand."

"I shall find sick people everywhere. In the matter of doctors, Guernsey is full of better men than I."

"And Marjorie Bartrand?"

"Ah! that is a different side of the question. I am concealed enough to think Miss Bartrand's mathematics will suffer."

"And you don't care—you are not one bit sorry at giving her up? Do you know, Geoffrey, I had begun to hope—"

"Miss Bartrand will be a Girton girl before long," interrupted Geoffrey. "Happily,"—he paused—"she is not without self-reliance, has more than a woman's share, perhaps, of ambition. When we see each other next it will be as fellow-students in Cambridge."

Dinah knew the tone of his voice. It was not a tone that invited discussion.

"Your leaving is an ill stroke of luck for me, Geff. Day by day Gaston's engagements seem to grow upon him. My time will be emptier than ever when you are gone."

"You may fill it, full as time can hold. I thought as I watched you charming poor Jack out of knowledge of his pain that you had missed your vocation. You should be a nurse. Yours are the ideal face and voice and tread that we want in the hospitals. If you ever harbor thoughts of emancipation, or of a mission," said Geoffrey, "remember my hint."

"When Gaston has used the last line that can be modeled from my face, for instance?"

The smile was flickering with which Dinah hazarded the surmise.

"When Gaston has got his last inspiration from your face! Unluckily for the hospitals, that day will not come quite yet. A woman with a mission should have no such vexatious encumbrance as a husband or a lover."

For once, Geoffrey's tone was cynical. He recalled his parting with Marjorie Bartrand overnight.

CHAPTER XL.

AT THE BUNGALOW.

AND all this time an offer of truce lay on the mantel-shelf of Dinah's parlor; an offer directed to himself in the handwriting whose Greek e's, whose girlish assumption of scholarship, Geoffrey's heart knew!

Can we wonder at the pagan notion that the gods must needs hold their sides for laughter when they gaze down on the ever-twisted plot of our little lives? Geoffrey and Dinah were within a hundred feet of Miller's house. Five minutes more and Geff must have been lifted—this time into quite other than a Fool's Paradise, when, abruptly, a new actor, jauntily floating in cobweb Indian silk, gleaming under a scarlet sunshade, with eight-buttoned gloves, with airs, with graces innumerable, made her entrance upon the scene.

Mrs. Thorne's manner was confident to-day, as of one with whom the world goes well. She ran skittishly down the steps leading from the hotel garden. She paused, tapping a high-heeled shoe in pretty impatience on the gravel. She looked this way and that, expectantly; at length, it would seem, decided, with a little merry shake of the head, for the chances of town over country. Then, with such ease of tread as high-heeled shoes are apt to confer on ladies whose summers are increasing, she commenced the steep descent of the hill.

"I hope Mrs. Thorne has not been calling on me. I hope, if we stop, she will make me no pretty speeches," said Dinah under her breath. "I could not bear them just now. If Mrs. Thorne makes pretty speeches, I shall say something true to her."

Geoffrey, man-like, showed signs of instant flight on hearing the ultimatum. He was in no vein, he said, he said, for Linda Thorne's fine spirits (was in no vein, I fear, for the better sex, at all, in its liveliness, or its asperity); he had an appointment to keep, a case of life and death, at the bedside of one of the quarry workers—would not be back till late—it was time for him to be on his road, and—

"In short," interrupted Dinah, "you have not courage to meet Mrs. Thorne!"

"If you like to say so—yes," was Geff's answer. "But don't

tell Mrs. Thorne the truth." He whispered this to Dinah, at parting. "Or tell her such truth only as affects herself, not you."

Dinah, however, was not in a temper for advice, even Geoffrey's. Erect of carriage, with a flush of the cheeks, a sparkle in the eyes, Dinah walked grandly up the hill, determined, at every cost, that final truth should be spoken between her and Mrs. Thorne, did opportunity offer.

"So our philosopher shows valor's better part," thought Linda, as Geff vanished down a turning to the right. "Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot positively declines to face me! We have never been rapturously fond of each other. Now it is to be war to the knife. Excellent, detestable young man! I accept the challenge."

And Mrs. Thorne mentally kissed her pale buff finger-tips in the direction taken by Geoffrey.

Dinah, meanwhile, had breasted the hill. Her head was held aloft, her fine arms were folded in one of those attitudes of natural repose that had always been the despair of Gaston's pencil. To the artist who has no "wood notes wild," the virtuoso with whom craft, workmanship, style, are all in all, is not perfect naturalness the most difficult to woo among the graces?

Linda spoke first. "So very glad to meet you. I have this moment called at Miller's and found you absent. We can have our chat out of doors."

She was serenely void of conscience. It was probably a mere physical sensation of antagonism that hindered Mrs. Thorne from offering poor magnificent Dinah her hand.

"To begin with, I must unburden my soul by confession." So she ran on gayly. "My visit was, really and truly, to your husband."

Not a change of color, not a shade of expression passed across the face of Gaston's wife. She possessed the self-preserving instincts of many weaker creatures, and of her sex in general; could conceal, feign, dissemble—except under the eyes, and at the voice of him she loved.

"The other night, at sea, just before the steamer stopped at Alderney, you must know that he and I made a bet, a very foolish one." Linda had the grace to redden as she remembered what that bet was about. "And Mr. Arbuthnot won. He wins in everything, it seems?"

A compliment may have been implied by the tone. It fell dead on Dinah Arbuthnot's prejudiced ears.

"And so I thought I would run up this afternoon to discharge my

debt. I deposited the stakes on a corner of your mantel-piece. If you see Mr. Arbuthnot before I do, tell him, from me, that he has won—that I am bankrupt! You will forgive me for invading your sitting-room, without leave, will you not?"

Still Dinah did not speak. Her eyes glowed, deepened until their soft English hazel seemed turned to black.

"I have known you long enough—we are sufficiently intimate," went on Linda, feeling that she was being forced into the fencing attitude—"for me to venture on such a liberty?"

"You can venture where you choose." Forth came the reply in Dinah's full, rounded tones. "The room is Gaston's. How can I question your right of entering it? But I must ask you not to speak of intimacy. If I saw you daily, until the last day I live, I should never be intimate with you."

Her voice was crystal clear, by reason of its low pitch. Every word was weighted by passionate, long pent-up feeling. Linda Thorne shifted about, ill at ease, on the feet that a minute ago had danced under her weight so airily.

"We ought, positively, to see more of each other! I think it quite too charming of you to be so sincere—quite. I always say to my friends—'Mrs. Arbuthnot has that most refreshing, that rarest of gifts, sincerity.'"

"Do you say this? Saying this, do you mean to speak well of me?"

"Dearest Mrs. Arbuthnot! Can you doubt the honesty of my intentions?"

"Never say it again. Be generous enough at least to spare me your praise."

The rapier points had lost their buttons. Linda Thorne fell into position quickly. That Dinah, good Griselda-like woman, loved her careless husband to the pitch of jealous idolatry, had been patent to her long before. Still, viewing the Arbuthnot household from her own level, Linda's judgment was—that Griselda had consolations. Mild ones, if you will; the devotion of Lord Rex Basire impartially offered to every pink-and-white nonentity he came across; the constant society, tinged by that glamour which beautiful women confer on all their relationships, of the excellent, detestable Scotch cousin, Geoffrey Arbuthnot. But consolations, nevertheless.

And this judgment sharpened her reply.

"If I were to refrain from praising you, my dear creature, I should lay myself open to the charge of envy, the one vice," ob-

served Linda, with pathetic self-depreciation, "which I am free from. Every man in this island, my own good husband included, sounds your praise. You have absolutely a queue—I mean," considerably translating, "a little train of conquests! Lord Rex Basire, Mr Geoffrey Arbuthnot."

"I ask you to stop! In the class of life I come from," exclaimed Dinah, aflame, "we hold it unworthy for a married woman to make conquests."

"Rather severe, surely! Cleopatra may never have known she had conquered, until Antony's peace was gone."

"Just as we hold it unworthy in any woman, married or single, to beguile the husband of another."

A tiny pink-hued veil reached to the tip of Linda's nose. We may assume that the veil concealed Linda's usual percentage of well-applied rice powder. But a gleam of white anger showed through veil and powder alike. A nervous quiver worked around her thin lips. For a moment it seemed as though Mrs. Thorne's vulnerable point were found, as though her antagonist's last thrust had gone home.

Then she recovered herself without too palpable effort. She laughed good-humoredly.

"Our strain is getting overtragic. We live in the day of little things. Sensation is out of vogue. Nobody pushes husbands down wells. Nobody 'beguiles' the husbands of worthier people. Even if it were otherwise, if Vivien were as 'the sands of yonder Channel, your happiness, dear Mrs. Arbuthnot, would be secure.'" It must be confessed that Linda made her counter-stroke with admirable neatness. "A beautiful woman married to an artist holds him in chains, rose-decked ones, of course, but chains—*chains*."

She forced Dinah to touch fingers. She covered her retreat under a little roulade of interjections sent back, with grimace of friendliness, across an expressive shoulder. "So fortunate we left the 'Princess!' Never could dear Robbie have stood the terrors of that night! One hears whispers on all sides of heroic courage! Mrs. Arbuthnot's name foremost!" Then Linda Thorne tripped down the hill, by virtue of superior coolness mistress outwardly of the situation, but with her heart thumping uneasily, with the queerest, hottest sense experience had ever brought her of discomfiture and defeat.

That Dinah's temper had reached the point which chemists call flashing point was certain. Another encounter like this, with sharpened memories on both sides, probably with the added ele-

ments of an audience, and either Linda Thorne or Dinah Arbuthnot must become ridiculous.

It was a dilemma, thought Linda, out of which the finest tact, the cleverest self-effacement, could scarcely help one. She was like a prime minister—the presumptuous simile tickled her—a prime minister who, having lost the lead of the House, would fain transfer his power, gracefully, to the chief of the Opposition.

Dinah was that chief; and she, Linda Thorne, was genuinely ready to abdicate. There was in Linda's nature a thin stratum of Bohemianism; the bulk of the woman was Philistine. She liked small popularities, to air her domestic excellences, her devotion to her Robbie! She liked to talk serious talk. She liked to dine with the archdeacon! Sooner than run the risk of scandal, or go through scenes of such dimensions as this scene with Dinah, she felt that it would be well to take Robbie and the infant, pack up her portmanteau, and fly. Oh, if Mrs. Arbuthnot—a bright thought striking her—could but be made to pack up *hers* and go—never to return! Even if poor Dinah took the worshiped Gaston with her, Mrs. Thorne felt that the price would not be too high. She would forfeit every sentimental friendship in the world sooner than again encounter the scorn, the passion of Dinah's girlish face. Above all—with an audience!

It was, really, this vision of an audience, of public battles-royal, of ridicule, perhaps of acknowledged defeat, which fired Linda Thorne's conscience to the height of renunciation.

Arriving at the garden gate of the Bungalow she heard, no unfamiliar sound, the voices of Rahnee and of Gaston Arbuthnot, at high play within. Before discovering herself, the mistress of the house peeped for a minute through the ivy-covered railings. She saw Rahnee aloft on Arbuthnot's tall shoulder, one little skinny hand clutching tight round his neck, the other beating him stoutly with a switch.

"Faster! Missy But'not! Dallop, dallop!" shrieked Rahnee.

The child's vigorous kicks were testifying to her delicious sense of power over her slave, when the unwelcome gleam of a scarlet sunshade caught her eyes.

"Rahnee—terrible infant!" cried Linda, falling back on the tired Indian voice that had been absent during her colloquy with Dinah. "Come down, naughty girl. Think how you must be teasing Mr. Arbuthnot."

"No, me not tease Missy But'not. Go away!" The thin arms

imperiously motioned Linda's dismissal. "We not want nobody—Miss But'not and Rahnee!"

"My visit is to Rahnee exclusively," observed Gaston. "Remember, Mrs. Thorne! You warn'd me not to come to the Bungalow. A mysterious something might happen before five o'clock converting us forever into enemies. But I will not have Rahnee included in the feud."

"Did I talk such nonsense—really?" cried Linda, with a forced laugh. "Well, who knows? Perhaps it will turn out that I was a prophetess, after all. Rahnee, little tyrant, come down this instant."

As a signal from Mrs. Thorne the ayah, who had been placidly dozing on her square of carpet in the shade, arose. With a quick flank movement the black woman bore down on Rahnee. Upon this, Rahnee, clinging closer to Gaston, raised her shrill voice to its topmost limits.

"Rahnee, I command! Oh! dear—dear, what a trial children are at a high temperature! Well, then, if you won't be good,"—Linda drew from her pocket a little silvery packet tied with cherry-colored ribbon—"if Rahnee won't be a good girl. What does she think mamma has brought her from town?"

"Tandy!" cried Rahnee, with a sudden accession of repentant wisdom. "Rahnee not tease poor Missy But'nct no more."

And bestowing two or three resonant kisses on Gaston, the child slid down out of his arms. She gave her mother a careless caress, then vanished, hiding herself and her "tandy" under the ayah's ample cotton cloak, into the Bungalow.

"She really is not a bad little monkey," said Linda, who thoroughly believed in her own system of education. "Touch Rahnee's feelings, and you can at once bring her to obedience. Feeling is the grand requisite in a child's nature."

"Who would not be virtuous," observed Gaston Arbuthnot, "if virtue were always rewarded by providential sugar candy?"

"And I so wanted to have a few minutes' quiet talk with you. Do you know, Mr. Arbuthnot, I am—seriously afraid"—for once Linda Thorne's words came slow and haltingly—"seriously afraid—you will pardon me, I hope, for saying this—that Mrs. Arbuthnot can not be well."

"*Dinah!* Why, she was fresh as a lily when I parted from her this morning. I have indirectly heard of her looking her best, since—"

But Gaston's face was unsmiling. The moment when he shuffled

and reshuffled the écarté packs, half a dozen men crowding to the veranda of Colonel de Gourmet's drawing-room, returned upon him with significant and disagreeable clearness.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot is looking exquisite. I thought I had never admired her so much as in her Quaker dress, her simple country hat! Still, there may be a bloom which exceeds health, a white which is too transparent. Your wife strikes me—how shall I describe her state—as low spirited, hysterical!"

"She eats and sleeps well. She can walk half round the island. Difficult to conceive of a young woman with Dinah's magnificent constitution as hysterical!"

"But she is so. I met Mrs. Arbuthnot on my way down from Miller's Hotel. I told her about our foolish wager, and how I had honestly called to discharge my debt. A propos de bottles, you will find your gloves on a corner of the mantel-piece."

"And Dinah?"

"Dinah, I was afraid, looked like weeping, under the broad light of day, in the open street."

"Impossible! She is little given to idle tears, even when cause exists for shedding them."

Gaston had reddened. He made the statement in the quiet tone of a man sure of his facts.

"I felt as though I had committed some horrible crime—and of course, when people's nerves are unstrung, it is sheer cruelty to attempt to argue with them. Our soft Guernsey air may be at the root of the mischief. Half the disorders in these Channel places are nervous ones."

"My wife does not know the meaning of nerves. Your kindness, dear Mrs. Thorne, for once leads you wide of the mark. Will you let me smoke a cigarette?" asked Gaston, consulting his watch. "In ten minutes' time I must be on my way to the Fort."

They walked up and down, amicably chatting among the pleasant blue-gray shadows of the lawn. Neither was ignorant of the art by which speech can be used for the concealment of thought, and Dinah's name was not mentioned until the moment came for Gaston's departure. Then Linda Thorne spoke again, and to the point.

"I meant every word I uttered, Mr. Arbuthnot, and my best advice to you is, give your wife change. Why not try Sark? It is the lightest air we have in the Archipelago. Or, better still, run over for ten days to Brittany." In saying this, she glanced at

him through her eyelashes. "You must, at least, allow that I am un-elfish?"

"I allow only that you want to get rid of us," laughed Gaston Arbuthnot, with imperturbable neutrality. "Also, that your way of working the scheme out is charming. You pack up wise counsel, Mrs. Thorne, in silver paper, tied with rose-colored ribbon, as you do Rahnee's candy!"

CHAPTER XL.

ONE WORD.

THE French waitress met Dinah as she entered the hotel.

Madame Thorne had called—there was scarce five minutes since. The visitor insisted—but insisted on entering. A thousand amiabilities were to be transmitted by the tongue of Louise, and something—the Frenchwoman shrugged her shoulders vaguely—had been left in madame's salon for monsieur.

"I know all about it," cried Dinah, with readiness. "Mrs. Thorne and I have just been talking together. It is quite right, Louise."

She assumed the lightest, most cheerful tone of which she was mistress, feeling, with inward smart, that the French shrug was overvague, that a glimmer of suspicious knowledge showed on the serving-woman's face. Then she walked, her step mock-elastic, a poorly counterfeited smile upon her lips, to her sitting-room. Shutting the door, with the automatic care human beings bestow on trivial actions in times when their hearts are fullest, Dinah walked straight to the fireplace. The "something" left for monsieur was evidently before her. A letter, almost amounting to a packet, stood on the mantel-piece. It was addressed in large decisive handwriting to "Mr. G. Arbuthnot, Miller's Hotel, Guernsey."

(Cette chère Smeeth! Elle sait si bien s'effacer! A pair of iron-gray men's gloves, lying, modestly, on the further corner of the shelf, did not arrest Dinah Arbuthnot's sight.)

"Mr. G. Arbuthnot, Miller's Hotel, Guernsey."

Well, reader, if Dinah had possessed only a few grains more of worldly experience it must have been clear to her that this letter never issued from the Bungalow. In the first place, by reason of the handwriting—when did a woman of Linda's culture affect the Greek c's, the up and down characters of an undergraduate? In the second, by the ignorance of common English etiquette which the use of the title "Mr." betrayed.

But Dinah had no worldly experience at all, neither had she the imaginativeness which renders some equally untaught people nimble at guessing. In her mind was one engrossing thought—Gaston. In her ears rang the text of Mrs. Thorne's message. "I deposited the stakes on a corner of your mantel-shelf. Tell your husband from me that he has won, that I am bankrupt."

There was no room, in her tempest of heart and brain, for doubts that could have been favorable to her own peace.

"Mr. G. Arbuthnot, Miller's Hotel." She took the letter—at first with unwillingness—in her hands. She turned it over and over. The envelope was too small for all that the sender had forced it to contain; it adhered on one side, only. A touch, Dinah thought, shrinking from her thought, and the edges must come asunder. Her hands trembled so violently that she let the letter fall, with some force, on the ground. As she picked it up she saw that the narrow edge of adhering envelope had become narrower. An instant more of dalliance—and the temptation, strong and imperious, to open it, altogether, had taken hold of her.

"Be true to yourself," whispered a still small voice, the voice of Dinah's better nature, "loyal, upright, as you have striven to be from the day you married Gaston Arbuthnot. Go away from him to-night, to-morrow, if you have not wifely courage to live your life out at his side. But go, with head erect, looking neither to the right hand nor the left, till the last."

Then rose another voice, bolder of tone, of strain less heroic.

"Poor, foolish, hot-hearted woman! Is it not possible that you are brewing a thunder-storm in a tea-cup? Why these turns and twistings of conscience? Linda Thorne, Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, thinking no evil, make one of the silly wagers common among idle people who inhabit an idle world. The lady is the loser, calls at her friend's hotel to discharge her debt, and meeting the friend's wife, confesses, playfully, that she is bankrupt! Open that quarter-inch of yawning envelope, as Linda Thorne, no doubt, intended you to do. In Gaston's absence, you have often opened letters addressed to him, by his own desire. Where is the fancied line between former right and present wrong. How could it matter to Gaston if you did see the contents of a packet in which there is probably not a syllable of writing?"

And Dinah's heart was vanquished by the meanness of opportunity. She opened it.

A length of folded ribbon met her sight; a tiny bouquet, odorous still with yesterday's sweetness, of hrier and of heliotrope; a sheet

of note-paper upon which one word was written. Bare hints—outlines of some unknown story, which jealous passion might easily color—fill up with vivid detail, endow with pulsating life! After the first moment's shock, Dinah stood like a woman petrified. Her eyes were fixed on the *one word*—never meant for their perusal! Her face was bloodless. She felt cold, stupefied with anger. It seemed to her that she could not drag herself from the spot where this hateful, sure light had dispelled her darkness forever. She waited—as though waiting could avail her! At last the striking of a clock caused her to start. She had got to dress, she remembered, to face men and women, to dine—for Gaston's sake. With an effort that almost cost her bodily pain, Dinah made her way into her bedroom. She locked, double locked the door. Then holding the envelope and its contents between her shivering hands, she tried to force herself into calmness, to resolve on conduct, if that were possible, which should be just to herself and to her husband.

He was guilty of no actual wrong-doing. This thought presented itself, in clear pure light, amid all the dusky half shades of her mind. Gaston was fickle, neglectful of herself, too easily led captive along the road of pleasure. Worse things than these she could never think of him. To the moment of her death he must remain her best beloved and her lord; the one man, could the hour of choosing come again, whom she must choose out of ten thousand. She did not accuse Gaston of wrong. She sought not to blacken Linda. For aught she knew, these delicately sentimental friendships, these intimacies which permitted tender expression—the yielding of a ribbon or a flower! might, in the world above her head, be held innocent.

What she did know was that she, Dinah, belonged not to that world, desired no further education in its usages. A comedy—an amusing drawing-room charade, perhaps—was in course of rehearsal between a tired Indian lady, needing sensation, and her husband. She would not passively, ignobly stand by, a spectator. She would drag out her life of paltry distrust no longer. Gaston's formal leave must be asked for, before she started; money also—enough to take her from Guernsey to the Devonshire moors. This would be all. Briefly, if Heaven would help her, honestly, she would tell Gaston what wish lay next her heart. And Gaston was not likely to thwart her! By Monday—oh, that it could be earlier—she would go back to her own people, to a life shone on by no sun, watered by no shower, a life shut out from keen pleasure as from keen humiliation for evermore.

Dinah sunk into a chair, and fell to examining the hue and texture of the ribbon, curiosity, for the moment, outbalancing cold repugnance. It was of foreign make, she saw; a relic, doubtless, of those days when two people, *who might have suited each other*, used to meet, to exchange furtive whispers in a Paris salon; a memento sufficiently precious to have survived through a decade of divided years, and to become the object of a keenly contested wager between them now.

"Tell your husband," with fresh purport Linda's message turned to her, "that he has won, and I am bankrupt."

She put back the enclosures in their cover, not suffering herself to smell the flowers' languid odor, or look again on the one word whose import her jealousy divined and magnified. Then, just as she had hidden the letter away in a secret drawer of her dressing-case, the first dinner-bell was set ringing, and Dinah bethought her that, if she would carry out Gaston's parting request, she must go into the dining-room, alone.

No further shirking of that "alone" was practicable. On former occasions she had quietly contrived to absent herself from the public table when Gaston dined abroad, pleading headaches for heart-aches, preferring tea to food, ringing the changes by which neglected wives, when they have common sense, keep their own sad counsel apart from the world. The time was past for deceits now, either toward herself, or others. Dinner, to-day, like all her future dinners, for twenty or thirty years, say, must perforce, be eaten without Gaston.

To drift—here, in truth, seemed that which lay before her! To drift! At the present moment to speculate on possible effects—to vacillate over a tucker, a locket, the color of one's dinner dress. A despairing human soul, perplexed over the rival merits of pink, white, or blue; a soul which, when love shone on it, had less than its feminine share of toilet vanity! As poor Dinah hesitated, her thoughts traveled back, by no road she knew, to Saturday's rose-show, her first meeting with Rex Basire, her earliest distinct doubt of Gaston's truthfulness. She decided to put on the black dress she wore that day, to pin a white rose, Gaston's flower by predilection, in her hair, to wear a silver bracelet, Gaston's first present after their marriage, on her wrist.

How fair, how marvelously fair she was! The fact struck Dinah with a sense of newness as she stood, waiting for the last dinner-bell, before her glass. Surely her looks, joined to such lavish love as she had given, might have contented the heart, the pride of the

most exacting husband. If she had only had more mind. There was the flaw, the fatal deficiency to a man with whom mind was all in all, like Gaston Arbuthnot.

She scrutinized the molding of her temples, the lines of her perfectly cut head. In outward proportion she thought there was not much amiss. It must be the quality of the brain that was poor. There must be an inherited peasant slowness, a bluntness of perception or wit, *something* which disabled her from holding her own against the taught graces, the pliant, inexhaustible lightness of such an one as Linda Thorne. She might, if lowlier duties had fallen to her, have been clever enough to manage a house, to look after her husband's interests, to bring up children. Amongst ladies and gentlemen—oh, the bitterness with which she uttered the titles of gentility half aloud—amongst ladies and gentlemen she had no place, no chance.

And in her nature, not thoroughly sounded as yet, but of whose depths the last few days had vaguely informed her—in her innermost nature were evil things that a constant pressure of temptation might bring to the surface. She was not like Geoffrey. No ministering to others could fill her life, at any rate not while she was young, while the cry for love had the double keenness of a physical and of a moral want. If she continued a hanger-on of the world that Gaston loved—"some one who must be asked, don't you know, occasionally, on sufferance"—she would, one day, meet with homage, differently offered, and from a different man to Rex Basire. Was she sure that gratitude would not be awakened in her, then vanity? Was she sure she might not decline, step by step, to the condition of that most pitiable among women—a wife, true to the cold letter of her fealty, who has at once outlived her husband's affection and the stings of her own self-contempt?

Dinah started, guiltily, as the sharp clang of the dinner-bell roused her into final action. It took a good many minutes before she could recover sufficiently to face the ordeal that lay before her. At last, arming herself by the reflection that, henceforth, all life's common actions must be gone through alone, and under a certain cloud of suspicion, she made her way to the dining-room. After a moment's trembling heartsickness, she pushed back one of the double doors—entered.

A hush, an involuntary suspension of knife and fork greeted her. The light through a western window fell full upon her golden head. The whiteness of her throat and hands was thrown into brilliant relief by the somber dress she wore.

"A saint of Helman Hunt's—Early manner," thought a high-church curate, away on his four weeks' holiday, and who never would know more of Dinah than the large sad eyes, the lips' carnation, the nimbus of sunlight-colored hair.

"Can the complexion be absolutely real?" floated through the brain of more than one duly aged and authorized feminine critic.

Miller, with his professional little run and smile, came forward. He ushered Dinah Arbuthnot to her place.

"Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot not expected, I believe?" asked the host, as Dinah prepared to take her seat.

"No. Mr. Arbuthnot is dining at the Fort."

"And Mr. Geoffrey will not return till late. Then I may be allowed to fill this vacant chair? Thank you, madam. I should not have ventured to place a stranger next Mrs. Arbuthnot without permission."

A minute later Dinah discovered—no stranger, but her husband's friend, Lord Rex Basire, at her side.

CHAPTER XLII.

EMANCIPATION.

DINAH ARBUTHNOT'S face asked vividly for explanation.

"Made sure Arbuthnot would be here—that is to say, *our* Arbuthnot"—Lord Rex stammered; he showed embarrassment that sat on him oddly; as he apologized for his uninvited presence. "The comings and goings of the Cambridge rousin are naturally beyond my powers of calculation."

"Naturally," echoed Dinah. She remembered, with a pang of self-reproach, what manner of errand kept Geoffrey absent.

"Strolled round here early—by accident, you know—thought I'd ask myself to dinner with your husband. Clean forgot, till Miller or some one put it into my head, it was guest night. That was half an hour ago. Ought to have started off, instantler, to Fort William."

"And why, pray, did you not do so?"

"Mrs. Arbuthnot, can you ask me!"

Rex Basire's tone adequately supplemented his words. And Dinah's pulse quickened. She was on the threshold, she remembered, of a new, an emancipated life. A wife who lives apart from her husband must accept her position, grow used to many things,

to every complexion of whisper among the rest. That is the world's immutable sentence. Away from Gaston, divorced from the arm which, during four years, had cradled her in warm safety—she must learn, like other unloved women, to rely on her own strength—her strength and the chivalry of all such knights-errant, such Rex Basires, as should cross her path!

About the chivalry more might have to be learned hereafter. Dinah realized, before the first step of her downward journey was taken, that her strength was weakness. She felt as though all eyes around the table must watch her with suspicion, read her secret. Rex Basire's tone of assured admiration brought the blood miserably, shamefully to her cheeks.

He saw and misinterpreted the blush.

"Thought, you know, as there was a rumor of the cousin's absence, I should have a chance of getting next you."

"You would have been better amused elsewhere, my lord. With Geff I can talk or be silent as I like. Geff does not mind."

Lord Rex, on this, made some whispered hit at the "model cousin's" excellence. As he ate his half cold soup murmured comparisons fell from him as to the men who are made of flesh and blood, poor devils! and the other men, too good for this world, who are made of ice, yes, ice, by Jove! But he was not great at covert allusion. The metaphorical ice got mixed with the metaphorical flesh and blood; his nominatives were nowhere. Breaking down, rather ignominiously, Lord Rex smothered his failure under a capacious sigh.

Dinah turned to him, with cheeks still burning. "I am afraid I did not understand. Men of ice! Men of flesh and blood! Were you talking of Geff or of yourself, Lord Rex?"

Despite her blush, the true eyes stopped him short, as they had so often done before. Ere Rex Basire had time to double back toward his starting-point there came an interruption—one of the trivial things not to be mentioned in heroic story, yet which do, oft-times, determine the current of a human life. A plain little man, his large checked suit, his open Murray proclaiming the tourist, had during the past two minutes attentively watched Lord Rex from the other side of the table. Upon hearing Dinah's mention of the name the stranger fidgeted with his knife and fork, cleared his throat, coughed. Finally, leaning forward with a bow, it was obvious that he expected, was eager for, aristocratic recognition.

"Lord Rex Basire, if I mistake not?"

"Sir! You are politeness itself. But you have the better of me."

Rex Basire accorded his interrogator a blank and frozen stare.

"Oh, the top of the St. Gothard, Lord Rex. You were traveling with the duchess. Her grace's carriage broke down—something wrong with the linch-pin—and as I was in the region, botanizing, I had the honor of offering her grace mine. Your lordship will recollect?"

"Her grace's carriage is invariably breaking down. Invariably. Besides," drawled Lord Rex, putting up a ferocious pince-nez, and resolute to nip renewal of acquaintance in the bud, "we are not on the top of the St. Gothard now. Ah, Mrs. Arbutbrot," he addressed Dinah in as low a tone as a man's voice can sink to without becoming an actual whisper, "*this* makes up to one for a great deal I have suffered at your hands."

"By *this*," said Dinah, whose courage was returning, "do you mean the cold soup we have eaten, or the colder fish to which they are helping us?"

"I mean the happiness of sitting beside you, of knowing I am so much forgiven that—"

"Her grace traveled on as far as Andermatt in the carriage it was my privilege to lend her. From Andermatt, if my memory serves me right—"

"Your memory is certain to serve you right, sir. The incident which I, it seems, have forgotten, was more than unimportant."

Lord Rex's manner was brutal; no other word would adequately describe it. The poor little tourist's eyes dropped to his plate, his face turned scarlet. Dinah leaned forward on the instant. With the gentle womanliness which was *her* breeding, she addressed him in her pleasant country voice:

"My husband and I met with just the same kind of accident once. Our carriage broke down, and we had to spend six hours, in wet and darkness, between Berne and Vevey. I should not have forgotten any one who had come to our help that night."

"Ah—you know Switzerland, madam? Then may I ask," the tourist gave a piteous glance toward Lord Rex, "if you take an interest in the Alpine flora? I have only time to pursue such things during my holidays." It is possible he pronounced the word without its aspirate. "But botany is my hobby; I get plants enough in my five weeks to fill my leisure for the rest of the year. Now in that very region you speak of, I have found two or three speci-

ments that are unique. If you will allow me to enumerate the Latin names, madam—"

And so on, and so on. The poor man was one of nature's choicest bores. His information was stale, his manner of imparting it prosy; his blindness to the suffering he inflicted, absolute. Dinah's face wore a look of kindly interest through everything. Occasionally (Lord Rex all but groaning aloud over his wasted opportunities), she would strike in with some question calculated to start the narrator afresh on new tracks, on new prosiness, if, peradventure, he chanced to lag.

She even bowed courteously to him, on leaving the table d'hôte; an example not followed by Lord Rex.

"A charming dinner, on my word!" So he broke forth, the moment he found himself beside Dinah in the welcome freshness of the garden. "May I ask, Mrs. Arbuthnot, what inhuman whim made you talk to that wretched snob?"

Rex Basire's voice went beyond the limits of petulance.

"Why a snob?" asked Dinah, meekly. "You know I can never catch the inner meaning of these names."

"Why? Because he was a snob. 'Her grace's carriage broke down on the top of the St. Gothard; he had had the privilege of offering his.' What the dickens did that matter to me? 'Her grace traveled as far as Andernatt in his carriage.' What the dickens did that matter to him?"

"Only this, perhaps—that her grace's misadventure obliged the snob to go on foot."

"Mrs. Arbuthnot!—I never expect a direct answer from any woman," Lord Rex exclaimed, with scarcely suppressed temper; "still, I should like to know why during a mortal three quarters of an hour you allowed that little wretch to talk to you?"

She paused. A shade of deepened color touched her cheek. "The wretch was intelligent, Lord Rex." (*Ay, and opportune!* This was a subtle parenthesis, put in by Dinah's conscience.) "I don't understand Alpine plants, but I liked to hear a good deal our tourist said about them."

"The 'obby he pursues during his 'olddays," observed Lord Rex, humcrously.

Dinah turned swiftly round. A streak of sunset goldened her hair, and the delicate outlines of her face. She gave a look of farewell sincerity at Lord Rex Basire.

"Do you remember," she asked him, "a conversation you and

I had on board the steamer? It was just after my husband and the Thornes had landed at Alderney."

Yes, Lord Rex remembered. He was not likely—this, with a sigh—to forget any hour or place in which he had had the good fortune to find himself alone with Mrs. Arbuthnot.

"We spoke about class distinctions. I believe you called me a Conservative. Certainly you told me you were the most out-and-out demagogue in England. You were all for fraternity, Lord Rex. 'Gardener Adam and his wife and that sort of thing.' Labor was the universal purchase money. Dukes and earls had best go back to the place from whence they came. Well—you meant none of this."

Lord Rex winced. "Unfair on a fellow," he observed, "to be thus taken au pied de la lettre, and—"

"You must speak in English," cried Dinah. "I have not French enough to understand your meaning."

"My dear Mrs. Arbuthnot! A man may hold theories—visions of an impracticable Utopia, don't you know—charming—ahem! to air in exquisite company; impossible to carry out in this rough chace of a world we live in."

Dinah stopped for a minute or more, sedately reflecting, before she answered.

"I think I understand. Socialistic opinions, if one is trying to make talk for a rather stupid woman at a picnic, may be well enough, especially if the rather stupid woman does not belong to one's own station."

"Mrs. Arbuthnot! I protest—"

"The gardener Adam, of reality, is a snob. A wretch, bound, of course, to lend his carriage to her grace, in distress, so long as he has not the impertinence to talk of duchesses or linchpins during the remainder of his days. I have gained a new bit of wisdom, Lord Rex Basire. It is not likely I shall meet you in England. If I do, I shall remember what you said to our poor botanist—'We are not on the St. Gothard now.' You might say, massacring me through a cruel double eyeglass, 'We are not in Guernsey now.' Good-night, my lord."

She touched his hand. She passed away out of his life with a smile. Her step was light. The rose-tints of the sky lent a fictitious brilliancy to her face. Wonderful how that poor young woman, Mrs. Arbuthnot, kept up her spirits! So opined feminine judges, looking mercifully down upon events from the drawing-room windows of the hotel. And under the sad circumstances—

the husband's indifference to her growing hourly more pointed—to be carried away like a girl by this foolish little lord's attention! But that is the nature of these pink-and-white, yellow-haired marionettes. The temperament, my dear madam, is not one that feels or sorrows.

Dinah Arbuthnot walked quietly to her room, then rang the bell, and told the waiting-maid that she would require nothing further, and that no one need sit up for Mr. Arbuthnot. She changed her dress for a loose wrapper, rested herself during some minutes, and with her face hidden between her hands, strove to realize the altered condition of things which lay before her.

It had been easy, an outlet to jealous anger, to declare, in the moment's heat, she would no longer live with Gaston Arbuthnot. During dinner, though the strain was tense, there had been certain excitement, a sense of perilous adventure, to keep her up. Now came blank reality. She must look at her position as a stranger would from outside. If she purposed in good earnest to seek refuge with their Devonshire kinsfolk, she had best benefit by Geoffrey's escort on Sunday, had best, wisely and soberly, begin to pack to-night.

Well, reader, "to pack," however chaotic one's mental condition, means—to use one's arms, see to the folding of one's latest intricate furbelows, make sure that one's newest bonnet shall not be crushed. Dinah got through this part of her work well enough; nay, inasmuch as packing brought her muscles into play, felt the better for it. Then came the bitter beginning of the end. She must sort her trinkets, must decide which things it was right to take with her into exile, which leave.

Gaston was the most careless man living. The key of his dressing-case was in his wife's hands, everything he owned of value in her keeping. It thus became needful, in locking over her own possessions, that she should take count of his. And in doing so their four years of married life returned, month by month, almost hour by hour before her.

A legacy of two hundred pounds had come to Dinah from a well-to-do farmer uncle a few days after her wedding. "Too much, rather, to give to the poor, not enough, certainly, to invest," declared Gaston—they were at the time in Paris. "We will go shares, my dear child. I will take one of the good uncle's hundreds for cigarettes, and you shall have the other hundred for chiffons."

Dinah wanted no chiffons—at Gaston's insistence, possessing more millinery already than she knew what to do with. So her

hundred pounds were mainly spent in buying pretty things for her husband. Gaston was fonder of rings and pins than are most born Englishmen. He had also an innocent way of directing Dinah's admiration to artistic trifles in the jeweler's windows of the Palais Royal and the Boulevards—trifles which were tolerably sure to find their way to his own dressing-table before the next morning.

Ah, their good laughs when these innocent ways became too bare-faced! Ah, the golden Paris days, when each hour was sweeter than the last, when they used to jest together (little knowing) at the musty axiom which limits a pair of true lovers' happiness to the shining of a single moon!

All the happiness—on one side, all the love—was gone now, thought Dinah, as trinket after trinket, memorials every one of them, passed through her fingers. She, who, in the bloom of hope, believed all things, trusted all things, had become harsh, unrelenting, a woman bent, of her own free will, though it cost her her heart's blood, upon leaving her husband's side. And Gaston—nay, of him she would think no further ill, to-night, at least! The proofs—little needed—of his light faith she had locked away, witnesses against him until the last hour that both should live. But she would think no new evil of him to-night. She would seek her pillow, leave the preparations for her journey as they stood. Midnight was now drawing near. To-morrow, she thought, when sleep should have renewed her strength, this beginning of her changed existence, this saying of "mine" and "thine" instead of "ours" might come easier.

To-day was still to-day. They belonged outwardly, in the world's sight, to each other yet.

There on the bedroom mantel-shelf was an unfinished model Gaston had made of her, a sketch which, had it reached marble, might some day have worked its way inside the walls of the Academy. Among the neat proprieties of her dressing-table were two of his modeling-tools, not altogether innocent of clay. There lay a half-burned cigarette—a glove that he had worn. Ah, heaven! And with this passionate affection at her heart, she was unloved of him, had no child with tiny tender clasp to make up to her for her husband's coldness! And she was still only a girl in years, and life but yesterday, it seemed, was sweet.

If Gaston, with clairvoyant power, could have seen her at this moment in her extremity of pain, doubt not that the couple of hilly miles between Fort William and Miller's Hotel had proved an insufficient barrier to keep him from her side. Common men, how-

ever, have common lights to guide them. They reap even as they sow.

When twelve o'clock struck and Dinah's aching head sunk on its pillow, Gaston Arbuthnot, with unburdened conscience, was settling himself placidly down to poker—the little game of draw in which he had vouchsafed to act as mentor to the youngsters of the Maltshire Royals.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GEOFFREY CALLS TO BE PAID.

It was a custom, dating further back than Andros Bartrand's childhood, that the Seigneurs of Tintajoux should hold a stiff and formal levee on the first Sunday of every alternate month.

The ceremony, shorn of its former old-world stiffness, lingered on, and to the feminine mind was one of the most popular Sarnian entertainments. For Andros Bartrand, with his fine manner, his handsome face, his learning, his temper, was scarcely less a favorite with the sex at fourscore than he had been in the flower of his age, half a century earlier.

"Will this generation of progress, will the coming democracy ever produce men of eighty like our seigneur?" the Guernsey ladies, Conservative to a woman, would ask.

And he who had argued that there may be higher ideals of an octogenarian than are comprised by culture, originality, vigorous health, an arrogant profile, and a courtly bow, would have stood poor chance of escaping without scar from their hands.

"The seigneur grows robust every year," remarked Mrs. Verschoyle to Cassandra Tighe, on the afternoon of July 2. The "Tintajoux levee" had opened. The elder ladies were ranged along the row of white-and-gold arm-chairs that surrounded the drawing-room. "Time stands still with Andros Bartrand. Look at him talking—flirting, I call it—with Rosie. The child declares, if the seigneur would only ask her, she is quite prepared to answer 'Yes!'"

"What would Lord Rex Basire say to that?" whispered Cassandra, warming up at the faintest suggestion of a love affair.

Mrs. Verschoyle looked mournfully perplexed, the chronic state of her good, maternal, overburdened soul.

"Lord Rex Basire? One certainly seems," said poor Mrs. Verschoyle inappositely, "to have seen less of him since the picnic. But then we have no gentleman to leave a card at the Fort! That

is the worst of an unmarried colonel in a regiment. One really *can not* do the polite thing. Does any one know, I wonder," a faint pink blush suffused the whiteness of Mrs. Verschoyle's cheek as some misty sequence of ideas ran through her brain—"does any one know if there is truth in this rumor of the Arbuthnot family leaving the island?"

"I can give reliable information about one member of the Arbuthnot family," cried the prettiest, least wise of the De Carterets. This young lady, in the absence of better amusement, had been listening to the exchange of confidences between her elders. "Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot leaves Guernsey to-morrow. I am sure of my facts, because papa went to inquire at Miller's after a room for Fred. You know, Mrs. Verschoyle, that we have had a telegram from Lloyd's?" Fred will be home on Monday."

"I hope your poor mother will get no shock when she sees him," Mrs. Verschoyle answered sadly. "Not one young man in fifty brings back a constitution from India."

"And Miller said the younger Mr. Arbuthnot's room would be vacant to-morrow. I appreciated Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot highly at the subalterns' picnic, and should like to have seen more of him, only Marjorie Bartrand would not let me! Yes, Miss Bartrand," ran on Ada de Carteret guilelessly, but putting additional meaning in her tone as Marjorie came within earshot, "and—although this is not meant for you to hear—I can tell by your face that you are listening, that your conscience pricks you."

Listening! Aye, that was Marjorie Bartrand, in truth outwardly listening, with strained sense, to the even hum of small-talk that filled the rooms, inwardly awaiting, with the keen expectancy that hardly needs the help of bodily hearing, for the step, the voice whose absence already made the world blank to her.

"I shall certainly not leave Guernsey without calling on the seigneur—to be paid."

To the cruel words, to such remote and slender hope of reconciliation as they might hold forth, Marjorie's heart clung tenaciously. She was softer of manner to-day than was her wont, played her part of hostess with studied dutifulness toward her grandfather's visitors. The annual Sunday-school treat would come on next week, said the rectoress of some remote country parish. Of course one might count on Marjorie Bartrand to lead the games? Had the great St. Laurence scandal reached Tintajoux, asked another? Maître Giroflée and his wife, the best church people in the parish, gone over to Salem because the rector had cut

down their pew—good solid oak, it must be confessed, worth so much a foot—in making his chancel restorations?

Oh, with what weary patience the poor child listened to it all, making occasional random answer, when answer was needed. How utterly had her vivid child's life lost its interest! How flat, how dissonant was every sound on this planet to Marjorie Bartrand so long as the footstep for whose approach she yearned was silent!

"Why—witch! Your cheeks are as white as your gown," remarked the Reverend Andros, happening, presently, to come across her. "We must get our Cambridge Esculapius to prescribe for you. What is Arbuthnot doing with himself?" added the seigneur, with a hard look at his granddaughter. "We are short of the inferior sex to-day. Why is Arbuthnot not here to make himself useful among the tea-cups?"

"Afternoon parties are not much in my tutor's way. But I believe—yes," faltered Marjorie, with one of her dark blushes—"I believe—at this moment—I see a figure like Mr. Arbuthnot's crossing the moor. We will put a tea-cup in each of his hands, sir, as soon as we feel certain of having caught him."

She fled into the recess of a window in the smaller drawing-room. Standing there, shrouded by the lace draperies, she wondered if *more* than a dozen pair of eyes had noticed her change of color! She clinched her hands until the nails impressed her soft palms painfully. She essayed, with will, to keep her rebel cheeks from flaming, her lips from weakness. She marveled by what art she could render her manner passive—Marjorie Bartrand, who during her seventeen years of life had, at every pass, gone aggressively to the fore, for good or for evil—on her tutor's entrance.

His ring came at the front-door bell. "Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot," was ceremoniously announced by Sylvestre. The French windows stood open. With the occult sixth sense which, in lovers, supplements the ordinary ones of sight and hearing, Marjorie divined that Geoffrey walked at once to the lawn in search of the seigneur. After a time she could hear his voice—excellent spirits Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot seemed to be in—as he made his way through the crowded outer room. She caught the laughter of Ada de Carteret, the thin gay tones of Rosie Verschoyle. A sharp cross fire of railery was being leveled against Geoffrey on the subject of his abrupt departure. Marjorie could detect and misconstrue the coolness with which he turned this railery aside. By and by came a new excitement. The Maltshire dandies were arriving in force, and in the general flutter which ensued upon this important crisis no single

voice was longer distinguishable. Marjorie's pulse went quicker. She knew that her time had come. Three or four seconds passed breathlessly, then a hand drew back the curtain behind which she was half concealed. Geoffrey Arbuthnot stood beside her.

"I have kept my word. I am here to wish you and the seigneur good-bye." His composed speech stirred every fiber of Marjorie's repentant, passionate heart. "It is a surprise," Geff added, "to find half the Guernsey world at Tintajeux Manoir. But I hope, Miss Bartrand, you can spare me five minutes' quiet talk?"

Marjorie, on this, had no choice but to look up at him. Tears, despite pride, despite principle, were in her eyes.

"To say good-bye!" she repeated, holding out her hand, then, with cheeks going from rosy red to white, shrinking back ere he could grasp it. "I—I never thought you could be so cruel."

So the girl cared something for him, after all, thought Geoffrey. She would brush a tear away to-morrow, perhaps, when those who travel by land or water were courteously alluded to by old Andros in the Litany, would regret him a little, as long as this summer's roses lasted. She would remember him until her heart, if heart she possessed, should be touched in earnest. No more than this. It was not her time to love, poor Marjorie! And he—must part from her as a strong man ought; must say "this is," not "this might have been." There should be neither recrimination nor bitterness. A touch of the sunburnt chiseled hand, a look into the eyes which had wounded him, as children wound, from ignorance, and then a brave and loyal farewell, this time a final one.

A table on which lay books and photographs stood at hand. Geoffrey took up a photograph of the Gouliots, Sark—some glistening bowlders, a fishing-net stretched on the shingle, a break of wave. How indelibly the bit of sun-etching transferred itself to his brain's tablets! How often, in dull future hours, would those bowlders, that break of wave, stand out in crisp relief before Geff's memory?

"Yes." He spoke in a key that only Marjorie could hear. "For just five minutes I should like to claim you. When I was at Tintajeux the day before yesterday, I was atrociously churlish to you, Miss Bartrand. I have been brought to see it since. Will you accept my apology?"

Geoffrey had "been brought to see" his churlishness! Then he held at nought her offer of true—the word it had cost her pride so dear to write! He offered her this cutting rejoinder, an apology!

"You are hard upon me, Mr. Arbuthnot." There was a piteous

deprecation in her voice. "When you were my master, I used to think you severe; but that was the worst. I believed you to be *human*."

"I am afraid I am very human." Geoffrey took up a fresh photograph; he examined it at a curiously short-sighted focus. "So human," he added, softening, "that I have not altogether given up the hope of your some day writing to me."

"A formal, set letter, do you mean?"

"A letter," said Geff, very low, "in which no thought of the Tintajoux acres has place."

For a moment her face showed one of its old bright flashes. In the world of story books it had ever been Marjorie's pleasure to scoff at the frail impediments, arising from the necessity of a third volume, which keep true lovers apart. Should paltry reserve—the thought came upon her abruptly—should school-girl cowardice divide her, as though three hundred pages of "copy" depended upon the quarrel, from Geoffrey?

"I don't know what you would have me say. I can't see why you should be off so quick! I tried—I hoped—"

But while the monosyllables came haltingly from Marjorie's tongue, a stir had arisen in the larger drawing-room. It was plain that a group of people, young men and maidens taking counsel together in a corner, were bent on some kind of action. Their project matured quickly. Rosie Verschoyle shot a beseeching glance at old Andros as she went through a meaning pantomime of the waltz step. Little Oscar Jones, with the air of a man upon whom rests an onerous embassy, made his way across both rooms to Marjorie.

"Ten thousand pardons, Miss Bartrand! Would not intrude for the world on a *tête-à-tête*. Fact is, you see, some of them want to get up a dance on the lawn."

"A dance! Absurdity!" cried Marjorie, bestowing on him an ultra-Bartrand look. Then, recollecting their position as host and guest, "I mean, would not tennis amuse you just as well?" she observed, with show of interest. "Or ask Gertrude de Carteret to sing, or—"

"But, dear Miss Bartrand, we all of us want to *dance*," persisted the handsome little lieutenant with a smile that he had grounds for believing irresistible. "Miss Tighe volunteers to play for us beside an open window. Powerful backstairs interest is at this moment bearing down on the seigneur. We only want an encouraging word from you."

"I never say encouraging words. It is too foolish," cried Marjorie, detecting, in her misery, that Geoffrey showed signs of flight. "To begin with, we have so few gentlemen."

"Few; why, there are five at least of ours. There is Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot— Ah! going already? Then we must reckon without Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot. And it seems some of the clergy dance, a mild square dance, and—"

"Yes, yes, Marjorie!" exclaimed a bevy of young girls, coming up and surrounding her like the chorus in an opera. "It is useless for you to be wise. Rosie has won the seigneur to say yes. Miss Tighe is ready. The piano is on its journey to the window."

"Will you be my partner for the first waltz, Miss Bartrand?" pleaded Oscar Jones.

Now, at any prior moment of her life, Marjorie Bartrand, deficient neither in temper nor in courage, would, thus attacked, have held her ground stoutly. But the girl saw, or fancied she saw, that Geoffrey was eager to get away. Her spirit was charged to overflowing. The eyes of half the people in the room were fixed upon her expectantly. Easier, she thought, before Geoffrey, before them all, to give a coldly assenting bow than trust her voice to speak; so she gave it.

Oscar Jones looked radiant. "Thank you, awfully, Miss Bartrand. This is a victory worth scoring. I will just go and start the corps de ballet, ask the orchestra to strike up some gay old waltz tune, and return to you."

The corps de ballet was already setting toward the lawn. Cassandra Tighe had taken her place at the piano beside an open window. Geoffrey Arbuthnot and Marjorie, with youth, with love, with the heaviness of parting at their hearts, were alone. But their good chance was gone. The thread had snapped which bound together poor Marjorie's monosyllables. Two minutes later, she would be treading a waltz measure, the arm of Mr. Oscar Jones round her waist. And Geff (the conqueror, to whom *all*, in whitest, girlish faith, had been conceded) felt his blood rebel. He took the reprisals of his nobler sex, offered prompt, italicised repetition of the crushing word, apology.

"You have accepted mine, have you not, Miss Bartrand?" He held his hand out, steadily, for a last good bye.

"I accept the blame you choose to force on me," said Marjorie, turning aside her face.

Cold, fettered, was the speech of both. Still, in this interval there was an encounter of pulses. Their hands had met; the fare-

well pressure was a lingering one. Propinquity—unspiritual god of youthful lovers—might, even at this supreme moment, have set things straight, had not old Andros Bartrand passed by, looked at them, smiled.

Marjorie moved away with a start. She felt as much divided from her sweetheart as though the Channel already rolled between them.

"What is this I hear about your leaving us, Arbuthnot? The little witch has been plaguing you, I suspect, with her false quantities. My dear sir, not one in a thousand of the sex has an ear. Music is an art in which they have had more opportunities than we, and there has never been even a third-rate female composer. You are going to England next week? To-morrow! Nay, if it is to be to-morrow we must have business talk together. Come with me, Arbuthnot, to the library."

The situation was a crucial one for Marjorie Bartrand. Scarcely had Geoffrey gone away with the seigneur—her heart told her, "to be paid"—before a dapper figure tripped, alertly, across the rooms. The well satisfied voice of little Oscar Jones reminded her that the first waltz was beginning, that they were engaged to dance it together. Her cheeks tingled with the sense of her humiliation and of her helplessness.

Oscar was in high spirits. "Coach gone, I suppose? Dancing not much in Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's line. Confess now, Miss Bartrand"—by this time they had reached the dancers on the lawn, Mr. Jones's arm encircled the girl's lithe slip of a waist—"confess in your heart that you rate enjoyment higher than you do Euclid and Plato?"

"I do not undersatnd your question. I can not deal in generalities."

Marjorie Bartrand held herself as stiffly at bay from her partner as was possible.

"Well, you'll enjoy our dance, for instance, better than being shut up in a school-room over musty books and figures with Arbuthnot?"

"I shall not enjoy it at all." Without a second's hesitation came he answer. "Hostesses do not dance. See, there is Ada de Carteret standing out. Give me my freedom, pray, and ask her."

"Your freedom—to go in doors, to 'work a last problem, write one Latin line,' with Arbuthnot? No, no, Miss Bartrand, you are the best dancer in Guernsey, and I don't often get the chance of a waltz with you."

For Oscar Jones, like bigger men, had his vanities. The thought of cutting out Geoffrey Arbuthnot was tasteful to him. It may be added that, although Marjorie's tongue had not lost its sharpness, she was at this moment the sweetest-looking girl among the little crowd of dancers. The fire of strong emotion glittered in her large eyes. Her cheeks glowed damask. Her slim, white-clad figure showed up, in exceedingly agreeable relief, against the dense background of cedar-shaded lawn.

That there was a certain dramatic interest connected with Geoffrey's going seemed divined by all. The divination rose to a whisper among the non-dancers, elderly men and women who, gathering on the drawing-room steps, enjoyed the pleasant sensations which bright sunshine, a garden of flowers, blue sky, and the sight of young people moving to dance-music, can scarce fail of producing.

"The child has a hectic flush that I do not like," observed the plaintive voice of Mrs. Verschoye. "I wish any one dared ask the seigneur if the mother died of heart-complaint. All that class of disease is hereditary, and poor Marjory is so little cared for! Not a creature to see whether she wears a thick sole or a thin one."

The archdeaconess was standing close at hand, looking on at the sunshine, the flowers, the lightly moving figures, through her accustomed smoke-colored medium. Madame Corbie turned round with slow severity on Mrs. Verschoye.

"Marjorie Bartrand is not a girl to die of heart disease!" The assertion was made with such suggestive profundity that mild little Verschoye recoiled a step. "Marjorie Bartrand wants the refined observance, the scrupulous exactness, the dignified correctness of manner which can only be obtained at school. None of your Girtons. None of your Newnhams. A strictly disciplined school, such as prevailed in my young days, for the formation of character and the affections. I do not consider," said Madame Corbie, "that Marjorie's study of Greek and mathematics has been to her advantage."

"And yet Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot appears so charming, so thoroughly reliable."

Seeing her Rosie joyously dancing in the distance, Mrs. Verschoye's motherly heart was disposed toward optimism on most points.

"Has a word been uttered against the reliability of any member of the Arbuthnot family?"

The question was an innocent one. And still did something in

its tone, something in the added blankness of Mrs. Cortie's smoke-colored gaze, seem to reduce the character of each of the Arbuthnot trio to a ghostly possibility.

Marjorie and her partner floated past the window at this juncture.

"Give us one more round, Miss Tighe," cried Oscar, in breathless staccato. "Never danced to such a splendid tune in my life!" Cassandra was laboring, hot with her exertions, through "Strauss's First Set," "Les Hirondelles," or some other long buried favorite of her youth. "Capital turf, capital music, a first-rate partner! If a dance like this," he proceeded, "could only last forever, Miss Bartrand!"

"Thank Heaven it draws to an end," said Marjorie, in a voice of steel.

A hundred yards distant, across velvet lawns and beds of flower bloom, she could discern the figure of Geoffrey Arbuthnot. He walked away, firm of tread, erect of head, from the acres of Tintajoux and from her. And her partner's arm clasped her waist, her steps twirled lightly. She was hostess of the party, must go through other dances, must entertain the seigneur's guests to the end.

From this time forth Marjorie knew that she could never more feel as a girl feels, never enjoy with a girl's enjoyment. She would be a woman, with the bitter taste of grown-up life in her mouth, from this hour onward till she died.

CHAPTER XLIV.

KISMET.

"To a naturally industrious man these islands would be the mischief." The characteristic remark came from Gaston, who was entering his wife's sitting-room just about the hour when Geoffrey quitted Tintajoux. "Yes, Mrs. Arbuthnot, these bachelor breakfasts, these picnics, these summer nights given up to card-playing, might well dispatch many an excellent fellow along the road to ruin. Happily," said Gaston, "I have the capacity for large waste of time. I am in no sense of the word an excellent fellow."

His tone was blithe; the fact of his calling Dinah "Mrs. Arbuthnot" showed a willingness to meet contingent domestic trouble with good temper. Stooping down, Gaston Arbuthnot snatched a kiss from his wife's pale lips: he pressed her drooping golden head between his hands. Dinah wavered not in her resolves. His ca-

resses were sweet to her as ever. But was not the dearness of this man's presence her danger; that which should nerve her in righteous sternness toward herself—and him?

"No kiss for me, my darling! And pale cheeks again—swollen eyes! Dinah, you are ill. Something in the place really disagrees with you. We will leave it. You can not stand the climate. I half believe I want a change of air myself."

Sinking down in an American rocking-chair, the easiest location the room possessed, Gaston Arbuthnot propelled himself to and fro until he reached a point at which his heels were on a level with his breast. He rested the tips of his boots on the corner of an adjacent couch, he folded his arms in an attitude of leisurely repose upon his breast. Then, the primary point of comfort exhaustively seen to, he looked, with closer heed than he had yet bestowed upon her, at his wife.

Dinah was dressed in a dark traveling serge. Her hair was brushed back tightly from her temples. Her face was bloodless, the outline of her delicate features blurred by a night of tears. It was impossible for her to be unlovely, even with pink eyelids and swollen lips. (If Gaston Arbuthnot's chisel could have compassed the tragic, how exquisite a Niobe had lain here to his hand!) It was impossible, I say, for Dinah to be unlovely. She seemed transformed, rather—a woman of harder, colder texture than her old self. When at length she raised her head slowly, the eyes that looked her husband through and through were fraught with an expression that his soul knew not.

"I want change, you tell me, Gaston, and that's true. We want change, both of us."

"Oh, I was not in earnest about myself," said Gaston, a little uneasily. "As far as health goes, the place suits me well enough. Only one positively can not work here! Now, look how this week has gone!" He took a note-book from his breast-pocket, he turned over page after page with a marked abandonment of his first sprightly manner. "This week, too, when I was to have got on with your bust, to have begun I don't know how much besides. Where are you, by the bye, Dinah—I mean, where is your model? There is a tidy look one doesn't like about the room."

"The model is on the top shelf in your working place. Although you don't like tidiness, I have been putting everything as straight as I could get it to-day."

"Like the good forgiving girl that you are! My dear child, I confess I have idled through this week disgracefully. Not to speak

of yesterday's dinner, of the old colonel's breakfast, of the best hours wasted—those wretched cards again—to-day, there was the initial mistake of being left behind in Alderney."

"You were left behind there. I think, for your own pleasure?"

"I am not so sure of that. The scheme, any way, did not turn out a success. Max Grimsby is the best fellow living—but one-ideaed. You can not get him to move, save in a circle. He is tothered to Max Grimsby's pictures. If the sun had shone he would have taken me round, among rocks and places, to 'verify' his sketches, as he says, by nature. There was a most disgusting fog. I could be taken nowhere. I bored myself to extinction in Alderney. I—"

"Gaston," exclaimed Dinah, fiercely, "don't say things of this kind, if you please. The time is past for them. I know about the wager you had with Mrs. Thorne before you left the steamer."

"Then you know about a very foolish matter," Gaston spoke with prompt self-control, although he reddened. "You have certainly been tidying with a vengeance, my love," he went on, looking round him. "I miss a dozen landmarks. What has become of my own priceless portraits?" Wherever they lived poor Dinah loved to hang Gaston's three or four latest photographs upon the walls of her sitting-room. "I do not see your embroidery frame, or—"

"Yes," she again interrupted. "I know about Mrs. Thorne's wager, about everything. It is a relief to speak plain, at last. I have known, for a good long time past, that you deceived me."

Down came Gaston Arbutnot's feet to their normal level. Away flew all his assumption of serenity. A couple of quick strides brought him across the room.

"If you are bent on having one of our wretched scenes, Dinah, look pray, to your language, as far as I am concerned. Say what you chose about Mrs. Thorne, if it gives you pleasure. Say what you like, of course, about yourself. Don't use disagreeable expressions when you speak of me! I'm the kind of conceited fellow whose love really won't stand rough usage. My love for you is the best possession I have. I don't want to risk my best possession. You understand?"

No, she did not, that was the worst of it. She could not see that her strong direct nature, craving and athirst for affection, imposed a strain beyond endurance upon a temperament at once ease-loving and volatile like Gaston's.

"I have never deceived you as far as I can remember, Dinah. I

have not sufficient energy of character, I should imagine, to be deceitful."

"No? We may have different notions of deceit, perhaps."

"One may deviate, now and then, from veracity," said Gaston, recovering his good humor. "Suppressions of fact, in minor matters, are forced upon us all. The man would be a wretch, not fit for civilized society, who should forever blurt out what he considered truth, regardless of the feelings he hurt, the toes he trod upon."

"For instance—to speak of something I understand—if you had gone to Mrs. Thorne's house after a mess dinner it would be forced on you not to tell me of it next morning?"

"To Mrs. Thorne's house—after a mess dinner! Such an unimportant thing may have happened once—twice, perhaps, during the weeks we have been here. But did I not mention it? Well, then, I do so now, and ask forgiveness," resting his hand upon her shoulder, "for the heinousness of my crime."

"And your wager—was that, too, unimportant? Your wager, made at a time when my heart was breaking! And the feelings with which Linda Thorne regards your winning it—" Dinah's voice choked.

Gaston Arbuthnot was, habitually, a man of mild speech. His most familiar men friends had never heard an English expletive escape him. When he was strongly moved his tongue went back, instinctively, to the language of his youth. And he was moved to sudden and keen anger at this moment. Three or four French expressions, fortunately not understood of his wife, rolled from his lips.

"You make me detest the sound of Linda Thorne's name. But take care—take care, in this matter of hating, that you do not force me further than you intend."

"I would rather you hated than tolerated me," cried Dinah, her tear-worn eyes looking bravely up into Arbuthnot's face.

Some new note in her voice startled him. It was a note, Gaston Arbuthnot felt, that might well prove the prelude to dangerous self-assertion. Was a *tu quoque* possible?

"You do not wish me to be tolerant. The husband of any excessively pretty woman must be so, whether he will or not. Now yesterday—suppose the medal reversed, Dinah, that I begin to cross-question you—how did you spend your afternoon yesterday? You forget. Let me refresh your memory. With whom were you walking down the High Street, toward four o'clock, in the dove-

colored dress I invented for you, the Gainsborough hat, the cambric collar?"

"I am not jesting, though you are." Dinah started to her feet, her eyes were level with her husband's. "Geoffrey came in after you had gone away; I was idle and dull as usual, and Geff asked me to carry some fruit and flowers to the hospital. The walk did me good. We visited a Devonshire sailor-lad—like one of my own people, he seemed to me—and I was able to talk with him, the old country talk I love so well. And afterward, coming back—perhaps with my heart a little lightened—I met—your friend."

"Poor, ill-fated Linda Thorne?"

"And everything went dark again. It was then I heard about your bet, how you had won, how Mrs. Thorne was bankrupt! Mrs. Thorne had made her way into the parlor while I was out. Your winnings were left for you by her own hand. Gaston, I found them."

"The situation, my dear girl, grows poignant. You found them!"

Gaston Arbuthnot checked himself. The dimensions of this domestic tragedy—this storm of wifely passion over a pair of iron-gray gloves—overcame him with a fatal sense of the ridiculous.

Dinah saw that he repressed a smile. Her righteous anger waxed hotter.

"And I intend to keep them until I die. If—I mean when you see Mrs. Thorne, you can tell her so."

"I will do nothing of the sort," said Arbuthnot, thoroughly incensed at last. "This constant Inquisition business grows unbearable! There will be no living with you, Dinah, if you go on nursing these puerile, these childish jealousies. I would no more offer an impertinence to Mrs. Thorne than to any other lady of my acquaintance. You must learn to be reasonable."

"Must I? I have tried to learn much the last few days without success. It is because I can't learn, because I am ignorant"—her voice had grown hoarse, her eyes dilated—"that I shall go away."

"We can go as soon as you like; I have told you so already," said Gaston, coldly. "We can go the beginning of next week, if you choose. You would not object very much to my leaving cards on the few people who have been civil to me?"

"I would like to go to-morrow, if—if you will give me money enough for the journey. Geff will be crossing. He can see me as far as Southampton. After that, I can easily make my way on to Tavistock Moor—"

"You—alone?"

"Why not? In the old days, before I married, I needed no looking after."

"And I am to follow with the luggage," suggested Mr. Arbuthnot. "You are quite sure there is room on Tavistock Moor for such luggage as ours?"

But his tone was doubtful. Less and less could he understand the look, yearning yet steadfast, that encountered him from his wife's eyes.

"I will take my luggage with me. As near as might be, I have tried to divide things. I have put all belonging to you in order, Gaston, as you will find."

"You want to visit your people without me? Say it out!" Gaston Arbuthnot's color heightened. "This is rough—harder punishment than I deserve, and a risky experiment! Think it over twice. I've been in the world thirty years, Dinah, and have seen somewhat of most things. I have never seen any good come of man and wife trying their hand at these little imitation divorces."

"I can not live up to your life," answered Dinah, unshrinkingly. "I can not understand you, or your friends, or the feelings you have for each other. If I stayed, I might grow myself to be—well, something I don't care to think of. I was meant for the ways of common working people. It suits me to be told things plain and straightforward, to keep to my duty, to find my happiness there."

"My poor Dinah! Have you not always kept to duty?" For once in his life, Gaston Arbuthnot spoke from impulse.

"Up to this time, because my heart has been full. I have loved you so much—there has been no room for any feeling but love! This could not last forever, and you always away, and others—ladies born and educated—not ashamed to take you from me. I might grow hard. I might grow vain—worse! Yes, Gaston, down in my heart I feel all this is possible. And so, if you please—"

"Don't hesitate. Let everything be absolutely clear between us."

"I will go home. My father's sisters, I know, would be willing to take me in while they live, and I can work at my trade as I used, of course, if you will give me leave."

Gaston Arbuthnot stood for a few seconds motionless. Then, without a word, he walked to the furthest end of the room. He stood, gazing upon some local oil painting of an impossible First Napoleon, mounted on a still more impossible charger, as intently as though he gazed upon one of Raphael's masterpieces. Let anger,

wounded pride—ah, more dreaded than either, let easy acquiescence be on her husband's face, Dinah could see it not!

She waited for him to speak, with the tension of nerves that is a bodily pain; hoping nothing—the time for hope was past—fearing only lest, under the sting of her proposal, he should *tell* her that he no longer loved her. The truth itself had, in that moment, seemed small beside the possibility of his confessing it.

But Gaston Arbuthnot was not a man of coarse or cruel words:

"I never looked for such a scene—I am not good at these high passions! Your vehemence forces me into the sort of position I detest. I have told you often, Dinah, that in everything"—he leaned sideways, as though seeking a point whence the impossible Napoleon might be more advantageously viewed—"in everything I am a light weight. No use asking from me the feats of an athlete. In life, I walk quietly. In art, I can produce nothing bigger or intenser than I experience in life. I am, what you would call, poor all round."

"Poor—in feeling, most of all," said Dinah with irrepressible bitterness.

"In the constant exhibition of feeling, you mean, in reiterations of 'I love you.'" Gaston turned, having got thus far; he walked back to her with marked deliberation. "In the art of quarreling about nothing—in showy expenditure of emotion on trifles—emotion of which, I take it, only a limited quantity is dealt to each of us, and which we should store up for large occasions—in capacity of this kind I am doubtless poor. If I were a moral nonentity, Dinah, no human heart in my breast at all, it would seem strange, after four years' companionship, [close as ours, that you should love me still!"]"

There was an inflection in Gaston Arbuthnot's voice that overstepped the line of tenderness. His face, though it was calm, wore an unwonted flush. To Dinah's, burning with passionate sense of injury, the very reasonableness of his speech was an offense. To Dinah his quiet pleading seemed fine words—altogether beside the present grave issue of their lives.

"Love! Ah, I love you, well as ever, to my misfortune! I shall love you till my death. Do we measure love out by the meager quantity of it we get in return?"

"And loving me, after this strong fashion, you desire that we should spend our lives apart? You tempt me to say a cutting thing," broke forth Gaston with warmth, "yet I believe it to be a

true one. A man had better be loved less, Dinah, and that his wife should remain contentedly at his side."

"No doubt of it. If you had married an educated woman you might have been happy with her—according to your notions of happiness. But there's no going back on that, now. I exist, you see."

"Yes, Dinah, you exist."

"And I am two-and-twenty. And since we came to this place, I scarce know why, I have awakened. I see my ignorance. I know that I want more than I used to want in life. Gaston—I can not fall asleep again. If you let me return among my own people I shall take to their plain country ways in time—perhaps shall find a little peace. At least I shall have work, real work, such as I was brought up to. I could never plod, patiently, at cross-stitch flowers for days and days together as I have done. And I can never rise to being a lady, as a week ago I thought I might."

"Then the only outlook would seem to be Tavistock Moor. It is not a brilliant one for either of us—for myself, in particular." Turning away from her, Gaston took up his hat, he moved aimlessly, and with a dull step toward the door. "If I do not cry 'Kismet' with a better grace," he added, "you must remember this sentence of widowhood has come upon one suddenly—as I think, without justice. But I shall not seek to stay you. I wish you to take back your freedom, unconditionally."

And so speaking, and while the coldness of death seized Dinah's tortured heart, he left her.

CHAPTER XLV.

LABELED AND CORDED.

"No argument can help us, Geff. A woman without a tithe of my poor wife's noble qualities, but possessing even a faint sense of the ridiculous, might be reached: Dinah, never! Oh, it is the absurdity of the thing which humiliates one! A French song sung after a dinner-party—the winning of a pair of gloves!" said Gaston Arbuthnot, bitterly. "And to think, out of such materials, that the jealousy of the most impracticable woman living could evolve serious tragedy!"

"Tragedy," returned Geff, "of which the fifth act is, as yet, unconditioned."

Dinner was over; a meal at which Dinah had not appeared. The Arbuthnot cousins, side by side, were pacing a remote walk of the

hotel garden. And Geoffrey, little by little, had made out the truth in respect of Dinah's crowning misery. With his heart sore as a brave-man's heart could be over keen personal disappointment, Geoffrey knew that he must arbitrate between the two people who stood nearest to him on earth, and with whose lives his own, by some fantastic stroke of destiny, seemed, for good and for evil, to be interwoven.

"I don't believe in rash judgments, formed when the blood is hot," went on Gaston Arbuthnot. "When Dinah burst upon me with this new proposal I felt as if ten years of my youth had been taken from me. My anger was at white heat, and if I had spoken as I felt— Well, I did not so speak. I accepted my fate with a decent show of self-command. Reviewing the position—yes, and remembering every word you have been saying, Geff—I believe it may be best for my poor Dinah to leave me, on probation. Let her stay for a couple of months with her people in Devonshire, see how things go on, and—"

"They will go on vilely! They will go from bad to worse." Geoffrey was in no humor for putting ornamental polish on his words. "When does good come from a tentative separation between man and wife?"

"Exactly what I said to Dinah. These little imitation divorces, I told her, are risky experiments. Impossible to make her hear me."

"Your eloquence must have been at fault. You have had perfect happiness, Gaston—there is the truth! You have had such a lot as does not fall to one man in a million, and you have grown careless of it."

Geoffrey's voice was set in a lower key than usual. Glancing round at him, Gaston surprised an expression on the strong features, a glow in the dark eyes that he remembered. Not wholly unlike this did Geff look on the late June evening when he came, four years ago, to his rooms in Jesus, and congratulated him, Gaston, on his engagement to Dinah Thurston.

"You have always been Dinah's friend. I thank God she will have you for her friend in the future. Toward myself, perhaps, you are a little less than kind. Some French proverb explains to us, does it not, how a man's friendship can never be perfectly equal for a husband and for his wife?"

"The French proverb is at fault, as far as I am concerned," said Geoffrey. "I am your friend. I am Dinah's. At this present hour I reprobate the conduct of both with strict impartiality."

"My conduct is negative. I find myself placed by an outburst of the eternal feminine injustice in a ridiculous position. I must, as men have done before me, live a ridiculous position out. Whatever my wife desires in the way of money arrangements shall be hers. On the day when she is tired of Tavistock Moor I shall be at her feet."

"All this might be aptly said if you were in a stage-box, a critic looking on at the histrionic break-up of other people's lives, with a view to the morning papers."

"I have tried, since I was a boy, to regard everything concerning myself from an indifferent person's point of view. The habit has become second nature, and—"

"Shake yourself free of it to night. You are not an indifferent person. You are not criticising a scene in a mixed drama. You have to decide whether you, Gaston Airbuthnot, intend, at thirty, to be a failure or a success."

"A failure!" repeated Gaston, his pride galled instantly. "In your office of peacemaker, Geff, don't allow your good will to run away with you. We have a score of big examples—Byron, if you choose, at their head—to show how men of shipwrecked lives can give the world the best of their genius."

"When you come to genius," said Geff, grimly truthful, "we are off our lines. We are talking of common men, not of giants. For a man of your caliber, Gaston, to forfeit his domestic happiness is to forfeit all. In losing Dinah, whatever her folly in proposing the Quixotic scheme, you would lose your right hand. Up to this time, even with a good and beautiful and long-suffering woman at your side, your backslidings have been many. Do you think you are going to work onward and upward without an influence such as Dinah's has been to hold you straight?"

"You speak hotly, Geff."

"I feel hotly," answered Geoffrey, without an effort at a fence. "My own life has been spoiled—I—I would say," he corrected himself, "the happiness which men like you, Gaston, can throw away or keep as they choose, is not likely to come near me. Mine must be sought for in such commonplace daily work as I have strength to do. This gives me a selfish interest in the welfare of the people I love. Your fireside and Dinah's," he attempted a lighter tone, "is the only one to which I can look forward in my old age."

Again Gaston watched his face curiously. Perhaps in the moment's keen illumination he read aright the larger nature than his

own, apprehended with his balanced mixture of worldly depth and moral airiness, a page whose intricacies should never, in this life, be wholly deciphered by poor Geff himself.

"You were right as to genius, Geoffrey. There is an ingredient wanting in me! If I had had your heart I should not at thirty be a manufacturer of third-rate prettinesses for the dealers."

Engrossed in talk, the cousins paced to and fro among the falling shadows of the garden for another hour. It was an hour, a talk, which neither of the Arbuthnots would be likely to refer to, which neither certainly would forget this side the grave. By and by, when night had come in earnest, when the roses and jasmynes that clung round the hotel verandas smelt dewy sweet, Gaston returned to the house alone. He entered through the little court that had been fitted up as his studio. Here a flicker of starlight overhead showed him his tools, his unfinished models, his working blouse, all the implements of his craft, neatly set in order as Dinah's hand left them. Passing on into the parlor he found himself in darkness, silence. For a moment a nameless fear—the possibility that she was gone—contracted Gaston Arbuthnot's heart. Then, with soft, eager step he made his way to his wife's bedroom, laid his hand on the lock, and opened the door by an inch.

A solitary light burned there.

"May I come in, Dinah? Can I be of use to you in your packing?"

To this she answered not, or answered in so low a voice that Gaston's ear could not catch the sound. He pushed back the door wide and entered, making fast the lock behind him. Dinah's packing, to the smallest detail, was complete. Her boxes, labeled and corded, stood in a row; her wraps were put up; her traveling bag was strapped. Dinah herself sat in a low chair beside the curtained half-open window. The light from a hand lamp on the mantel-shelf just enabled Gaston to discern the dead whiteness of her tired face.

"Your packing done?" he asked her. "And have you moved these heavy boxes by yourself?"

"The Frenchwoman helped me. I had no need of her—my arms are strong—but when she insisted, I thought it would look strange to refuse longer. I tried to speak to her lightly—just saying that I had to go away, of a sudden, to stay with friends in England."

"That was wise. It were a pity that idle tongues should begin to talk of us already."

No answer came to this. Gaston saw that her hands trembled, and as they lay tightly clasped together on her knee.

"And about money, Dinah?"

Crossing the room, Mr. Arbuthnot shut down the window, then placed himself at the distance of two or three feet from his wife. He looked at her long and tenderly, looked as though on that white, strained face he saw some beauty which the dullness of his senses, the selfishness of his heart, had never during the past four years let him discover.

"Geoffrey and I have just had a long talk. I believe, as far as Southampton, you had better let Geff be purse-holder. Then we must think of the future. We must plan as to a permanent settlement. I am a poor man, you know, Dinah, or rich only by fits and starts. If I can secure to you two hundred pounds a year, could you make it enough?"

Dinah raised her clasped hands deprecatingly. Her speech failed her. Now in the moment when she needed strength, self-control most, they proved traitors. She could only sit, faint, cold, sick, only hear the details of her own passionate wish put into calm, reasonable—ay, and generous detail by Gaston.

"For the first year," he repeated, "until I become a steadier worker, could you make an allowance of two hundred pounds suffice?"

"I want nothing but a few pounds at first," said Dinah, with a desperate effort. "After that I will work—plain sewing, out-door work, anything they can find for me to do."

"You might get plain sewing and out-door work, too, without going as far as Tavistock Moor."

"But I am known there. I am not the sort of woman—I mean as yet—to make my way alone among strangers."

"You shall neither go to Tavistock Moor nor among strangers. You shall remain with me." Gaston said this with slow emphasis. "The law is on my side."

Poor Dinah started up. The world seemed to float away from before her. A piteous look in which—yes, amidst all its anguish—there was a tremble of hope, went across her blanched face.

"My sins have been grievous enough, the sins of carelessness and selfishness—they have not gone deeper. Let the future make up for them. Forgive me, Dinah!" Arbuthnot's arms were opened

wide. "I could not work, I could not live without you. I love you better than my life."

With a cry as of a child taken back, unexpectedly, to the lost shelter of home, Dinah fell upon his breast.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A BY-TERM MAN.

BUT no such good thing as reconciliation fell to Marjorie Bartrand.

Within a week of Geoffrey's departure Dinah and her husband, bride and bridegroom once more, started joyously on their way to Italy. There was a little wonder among the few people who had known them, a little hypothetic gossip, an unjust suspicion, perhaps, that Linda Thorne could clear up more secrets than one, "as she listed." And then Guernsey knew the name of Arbuthnot no more. Marjorie Bartrand must take up life at its old point before love, before disappointment made acquaintance with her—must stand chill and alone, in the same Arcadia where she stood beside Geoffrey on the morning of their one day's engagement; must work under a new teacher in the school-room where every book, every window-pane, spoke to her of the past, and of the sharp irrevocableness of her loss.

Autumn faded, monotonously, into the season of soft weather which in the Channel archipelago does duty for winter. March came again with its outside show of hope; all Tintajoux busy at farm work—the seigneur, alert of step, taking part in his potato-planting and vraise harvest, like a man of five-and-twenty. Later on, the cuckoo flower blushed anew, the rooks vociferated from the tree-tops. And then, a little later, the roses reddened. Marjorie Bartrand, conning over the entries in her last year's pocket-book, began to know the meaning of the somber word anniversary.

"To-day," after this fashion the record ran, "commenced my reading with Geoffrey Arbuthnot."

"Many faults in my Latin exercise. Geoffrey Arbuthnot stern and inhuman."

"Have resolved to lecture a certain person on his neglect of his wife. And on frivolity."

"This day received my first letter from Geoffrey Arbuthnot."

And so through the brief drama, until a final entry on Sunday,

July the 3d—"To-day Geoffrey Arbuthnot left Guernsey forever." After which all was blank—in the pocket-book, as elsewhere.

There were somber anniversaries, I say, for Marjorie Bartrand. For two or three of the young women who have flitted across the background of this story, summer brought the sound of jocund bells, brought a day which to each must henceforth be the one crowning anniversary, dark or sunny, of life. Rosie Verschoyle took to herself a mate, happily for Rosie, a worthier man than Rex Basire. Ada de Carteret became the wife of little Oscar Jones. Marjorie enacted bride-maid, until the sight and smell of orange blossoms were a weariness to her. She felt glad when weddings and summer were alike over, when the scents of blown syringa and heliotrope belonged definitely to the past, glad when the equinox had stripped the woods, and November, grave and pale, approached, like a friend who knew her trouble, and had solace in store for her.

For Marjorie's character had opened out rather than altered. She was a Bartrand—high-handed as ever; during the past fifteen months had worked with a courage betokening of what tough fiber her spirit was made. In November a decisive step toward the Alma Mater was to be taken. Mademoiselle Pouchée, the earliest on the Tintajoux list of governesses, had long besought Marjorie to stay with her in Cambridge, and the seigneur, with exceeding bad grace, had tardily consented to the visit. For Cambridge meant Girton! Marjorie, of late, had been coaching with a Girton graduate who held office in the Guernsey college, and was promised credentials to the highest feminine magnates of the University. "Women who, in achieving renown, had lost the fairest ornament of their sex." Thus spoke old Andros, stirred by the irreconcilable antipathies of his youth, antipathies which sixty subsequent years amidst a world in full progress had failed to modify.

"The best person you could come across would be that tutor of yours—Arbuthnot." The seigneur brought the blood into Marjorie's cheeks by telling her this, one day. "We must conclude that I shall die, some time. It is given to few men to draw breath in three centuries. When I am gone you will need a husband more than the Higher Education. I liked Arbuthnot. He was a shallowish classic and overful of this modern 'know-all, know-nothing' spirit. But he was a *man*—so many honest English stone, moral and physical, in him! A good make-weight for a bit of wandering thistle-down like you."

The speech lingered in Marjorie's penitent soul. If things had gone differently, then, old Andros would not have said nay to

Geoffrey's suit! Her own passionate temper, the jealousy that could brook no rival, present or in the past, were alone answerable for love forfeited, for a vista of long years, out of which the sweet fullness of youth, at youth's best, should be wanting.

And blood warm and generous ran in Marjorie's veins. Her object in visiting Cambridge was, of course, to make personal acquaintance with Girton. Her hopes and fears must be centred on the august ladies who in future days would be her Dons. But the remembrance of her lost sweetheart plucked ever at her heart. If by accident, Geoffrey crossed her path, what would be her duty? That was the thing to consider—*duty*. Simply as an old comrade, might she not hold out her hand, seek a final word of explanation? At what nice point should self respect, a due sense of wounded Bartrand pride, draw the line of unforgiveness?

These were not questions she could propound to her Girton coach, a lady of fair exterior, young in years, but who had recently come out well in two Triposes. Cassandra Tighe, with her lowlier range of thought, stood nearer to one, Marjorie felt, her sixty winters notwithstanding, in such trivial human perplexities as belong to love and lovers. In these poor matters ignorance would seem to possess a spurious wisdom of its own. The higher sciences assist one moderately. And so, on the vigil of her English journey, the girl started away between the lights, alone, and with an overflowing heart, to seek her old friend's counsel.

It was a typical autumn evening of this mid-Channel region. A north-west wind shivered and sobbed among the poplars that hedged the entrance-way of Cassandra's domain. The garden dahlias drooped their heads, the chrysanthemums with their thin, half-bitter odor, showed wan and ghostly in the thickening dusk. An irresistible sense of decay was conveyed by the fitful rustle of the falling leaves. The surrounding fields and copses were shrouded in vague mist. Loss and uncertainty—these seemed the dominant notes in the pallid landscape. They suited Marjorie Bartrand's mood. Were not loss and uncertainty the dominant notes of her own changed life?

The cottage door stood open. No sound stirred within, save the ticking of the old Dutch clock on the stairs. Unannounced, she made her way in to Miss Tighe's home-like ground-floor drawing-room. The weather was too mild for more than a pretense at fire, the hour not late enough for lamp or candle. Cassandra sat unoccupied beside the scarce-lighted hearth. The kindly lady jumped up at the sound of Marjorie's step, then almsat with an air of

shame, began to excuse herself for her idleness. She had had a busy gardening day, little credit though her borders did her, and after dinner meant to practice for a couple of hours at her harp. "But even Cassandra Tighe," she added, "must be tired sometimes. I am an old woman, Marjorie. It is the prerogative of all old people, save the Reverend Andros Bartrand, to sit when the day draws in with hands folded. At such times we live in the past, as you young ones love to do in the future."

"The future," repeated Marjorie, in an underbreath; "that is what I want to speak to you about. I chose this hour on purpose. The best time to talk of difficult things is *entre chien et loup*, as the Guernsey folk say."

She sat down somewhat dejectedly on the opposite side the hearth. The young woman and the old one could just discern each other's faces by the flicker of the slow-burning fire.

"So you start for Cambridge to-morrow! And your grandfather, I hear, gives you a letter to the Master of Matthias. Well, Marjorie, though you should fail to Girtonize the Spanish nation eventually, I must praise you for your present cleverness in Girtonizing the Seigneur of Tintajoux."

"The seigneur was never more obdurate. 'If it pleased my granddaughter to roam the country with an organ and a monkey, she would do it; I could only see that the organ and the monkey were good of their kind.' This is his charming way of putting things—his excuse for giving me an introduction outside of Newnham or Girton."

"And your *coach*, Miss Travers, is to be your escort. She is comelier than one could have expected, poor thing. I have no prejudices, as everybody knows," said old Cassandra. "When I heard a Girtonite was coming to our college I held my peace. If one of these emancipated young women has regular features or a bright complexion, I acknowledge the fact. Still, one wonders—"

"How such a girl as Miss Travers could choose the higher life, instead of marrying—some man like Lord Rex Basire, say, or Mr. Oscar Jones!"

"Those two are not the only types of man extant," observed Cassandra.

To this there succeeded a sufficiently pregnant silence. Marjorie broke it, with effort. Her voice had become unsteady. Her sentences were disjointed.

"We are to stay one night in London—I don't know whether grandpapa told you about the plans? Next day we shall see what-

ever sights are visible through the November fog, and late in the afternoon I shall run down to Cambridge. It is high time I learned to knock about the world alone! If I work steadily when we come back to Guernsey, very likely I may go up to Girton as a by-term man in January."

"Is this the future you wanted to talk about?" Cassandra Tighe bent forward. She looked hard at the slim girlish figure, the delicately feminine face of Marjorie Bartrand. "You must learn to knock about the world alone! You will go up in January as a by-term man! These prospects may be intoxicating. We require, I think, no assistance from the friendly half light to discuss them in."

The remark went home. Marjorie's ill-fated love affair had long been an open secret between her and old Cassandra Tighe, and in a few minutes' time half confidences were over, reserve had gone to the winds. Geoffrey Arbuthnot's name, for the first time for months, was on the girl's trembling lips.

"I am not likely to be overforward again, Miss Tighe. But, strive as I will, the longing overcomes me to see Mr. Arbuthnot—before he marries some one else—to give him a last chance of explanation. The word—the one word—I wrote that miserable afternoon, may never have reached him. When I heard Mrs. Arbuthnot was out," Marjorie made confession, "my courage went from me—I had hoped to leave my packet safe in Dinah's hands—and I just gave it, without a message, to the servant who answered my ring. Then I drove away—fast, for fear Geoffrey should meet me and see my face."

"The Arbuthnot people were a singular trio." Cassandra made the remark with an irrelevant neutrality savoring of the serpent's wisdom. "The best looking of the men, not your tutor, Marjorie, is doing good things, it seems, as an artist. Colonel de Gourmet has a correspondent in Florence, where the Gaston Arbuthnots live, and the accounts of them are favorable. You know, of course, that there is a Miss Arbuthnot?"

"Yes, I have heard the news. It is good to think that Dinah must be a happier woman now."

"We shall not see such a facetagrain on our shores. Do you remember my mistake about her, Marjorie—the lecture I made you read your tutor on his frivolity?"

"You ask me questions instead of answering mine, Miss Tighe. If I should meet him—if through blind accident I should speak to

Geoffrey again, would it be delicate, would it show proper womanly pride, for me to attempt one last explanation?"

Cassandra did not instantly reply. The sobbing of the wind had died among the poplars. The leaves fell noiselessly to the damp earth. Only the ticking of the clock on the stairs broke silence.

"Forever—never!"

"Never—forever!"

And with each second, thought Marjorie, how many human loves must be laid low, how many hearts must begin to ache for all time as hers was aching now!

Miss Tighe sat calm and placid, as when the girl first entered, her hands folded on her knee. "And what earthly inducement had Pouchée to settle in a University town?" she observed at length. "Why does the woman live alone?"

"Her father was maître d'escrime in Cambridge. She and her mother live on in the house where he died. I rather think mademoiselle gives French lessons still."

"Oh, mademoiselle gives French lessons still, does she?" Cassandra's tone was absent. She rose, moved closer to the hearth. Her face was level with the miniature portrait of a lad in old-fashioned uniform that hung there. By and by, "I am going," she said very low, "to tell you something about which I have been silent for forty years."

"Miss Tighe—"

"Don't be afraid of an old woman's prosy history, or of a sermon. You will have neither. Forty years ago, child, there lived, in the far north of England, a girl, somewhere about your present age. This girl was on the eve of being married. Her wedding-dress was ordered, the guests were bidden. Well, at the eleventh hour she chose, in a flame of paltry jealousy, to resent some fancied want of devotion in her lover. He was single-minded, loyal—of finer stuff altogether than herself. They might have been reconciled in an hour if she would have let her heart speak, have returned to the arms outheld to receive her. The girl would make not an inch of concession. She came, as you do, Marjorie, of people who look upon unforgiveness as a virtue. She heard around her the old stock phrases—delicacy, family pride—the righteousness of subordinating feeling to will! And so it came to pass that the lover, having neither wealth nor title, was allowed to go. He exchanged into a regiment under orders for India. Our troops were then in Afghanistan, engaged in hot fighting, and—"

Miss Tighe's voice—the brave, kind voice that Marjorie had al-

ways known—broke down. Marjorie felt herself turn chill with a vague terror. To hear of this white-haired woman's love seemed, in her overstrained mood, like receiving a message from the world of ghosts. She awaited the sequel of the story, not speaking, not lifting her eyes to the narrator's face.

"The lad fell—a locket his sweetheart had once given him hidden in his breast. It came back to her, through a brother officer who knew something of the dead man's story—and *with a stain on it*. That stain has marked every day of a lonely life throughout forty years. You will not speak of this again, remember."

"Never, Miss Tighe, I promise you."

"But keep my words in your memory. If you meet Geoffrey Arbuthnot, if a moment comes when happiness beckons one way, the Bartrand pride another, they may, perhaps, be of use to you."

So human hearts can remain true to their griefs for forty years! Marjorie pondered on this fact as she walked back through the November-smelling, dark country to Tintajeux. She felt, with the certainty of morbid eighteen, that her own life would be a counterpart of Cassandra Tighe's. She would never love any other man than Geoffrey, would never marry where she did not love. She was not likely to die. In the glow of her young health, feeling her limbs so lithe—the mere act of walking and breathing an ever-renewed bodily pleasure—death lay over an horizon which she had not yet sighted. Ah, if she could hear Geff's step approaching now, if she could feel his hand-clasp, strong, friendly as in the days of old, the collective pride of the whole Bartrand race would not long stand between them!

But the milk lanes were forsaken; no human step save her own was to be heard. The lights were lit in the scattered cottage homesteads, the children at play round the fire, the elders resting after their day's work. Through the low windows Marjorie could see one family group after another as she passed along, and felt her own loneliness the greater. As she came near Tintajeux the cry of the owls, than which no more freezing sound exists in nature, was all that gave her welcome.

"That stain has marked every day of a lonely life throughout forty years."

The moral of Miss Tighe's story lingered in Marjorie's heart. As she and her grandfather sat for the last time together over dessert, old Andros took not unkindly notice of her white cheeks and darkened eyes.

"You must get back your good looks before you show yourself in Cambridge. Women are sent into the world to be graceful. When they fail in that, they fail in everything. Be a senior wrangler if you will, but keep your complexion. You have grown much more like your father of late." This was the highest form of praise Andros Bartrand could offer her. "Don't go back to the little skinny Spanish witch of former days."

"I wish I could, sir," cried Marjorie, a flash of quickly roused mutiny in her eyes. "The days when I was a little skinny Spanish witch were better than any I am likely to know again in this world."

CHAPTER XLVII.

BESIDE THE CRADLE.

"I just feel we are too happy. It makes me tremble, Gaston. I would rather see the speck of cloud no bigger than a man's hand than for ever live in dread of it."

"You would rather have anything than the actual, my dear. That is a little weakness of the sex. Surely your daughter ought to fill every crevice of your dissatisfied heart!"

"She fills it, fuller than my heart can hold—my own sweet baby. She is a wonderfully forward child, is she not? So strong of her age—so intelligent—so beautiful!"

"Not beautiful, Dinah. I am no amateur of infants, although I can tolerate their presence after the age of two years. As regards the particular infant sleeping in the cradle, yonder, even my knowledge of the subject enables me to say she is unornamental—as unornamental a child as could be found in Florence."

"She is your living portrait," returned the mother, unconscious of irony. "Yes, even to her shrewd looks, to the firm way she clasps her fingers. And already—in that," murmured Dinah, penitently, "it may be she favors me—already, baby has a temper."

These exceedingly domestic confidences were interchanged in a vast old Florentine room, fitted up by Gaston Artuthnot as a studio, and on a November night, some forty-eight hours later than the gray evening when Marjorie paid her farewell visit to Cassandra Tighe.

But November in Florence is a different season to November in the English Channel. The dry nipping touch of Italian winter had already made itself felt beside the banks of the Arno, and the

blaze from an up-piled heap of olive-fagots cast a ruddy glow upon the room and its occupants. Gaston Arbuthnot, his day's work done, reclined, outstretched, in one of his favorite American chairs beside the hearth. On the other side the fire was a cradle, wickered, capacious, of the genuine Italian build that you may remember in many a sixteenth-century picture. And beside this cradle stood Dinah, serious of mien, gazing with rapt, madonna-like devotion at the little English child who slept there.

At Gaston's last remark she stooped and drew a muslin curtain tenderly over her daughter's face. Then she came across to her husband, she sunk on her knees beside him. Stealing a soft arm round Mr. Arbuthnot's neck, Dinah brought his cheek within reach of her lips.

"Honestly and without jesting, you can say you think the child *ugly*!"

"I think she will never be as handsome as her mother—the better for herself, perhaps. Beauty is a snare. Who should know that better than Dinah Arbuthnot?"

"If I had been—well, plainer than I am, would you have sought me out, I wonder, in Aunt Sarah's little cottage that summer?"

"Difficult to speculate backward! I had thought some plainish women charming before I heard the name of Lesser Cheriton."

"That is a matter of course. You had been the friend of Linda Thorne."

"Linda Smythe, as she was, at that time. I don't know that 'cette chère Smeet' could ever be called charming. She was lively, apt, a thorough mistress of situation and inexhaustively talkative—to a boy fresh from school that gift of talkativeness goes for much! She lacked charm. I have heard her mourn over the deficiency, in her plaintive little way, poor soul, with tears."

How calmly they spoke of Linda's qualities—this Darby and Joan of nearly six years' standing, to whom romance, in its earliest, sweetest bloom, would seem to have returned! From what a different standpoint Dinah could review the sentimental dilemmas of Gaston's youth! How the renewal of their love had bettered them, man and woman alike!

"Sometimes when I look back upon our Guernsey days, the days, I mean, which followed on that Langrune picnic, I feel a great remorse. Things ended happily—because you would not let my jealous temper ruin both our lives."

Possibly, thought Gaston Arbuthnot, because of Geff. He remembered their talk when the summer eve was sinking into dark-

ness, the eve upon whose morrow Dinah would fain have quitted him forever.

"But I deserved the heaviest punishment that could have fallen upon me. Jealousy, such as mine was then, means selfishness, not love."

"Spoken from a fine moral height! All the same, Dinah, I think you did love me slightly."

"I was unjust to Linda Thorne about your wager. When I opened the packet she left for you I was dishonorable. The whole thing may have been a jest—may have belonged to a time before you knew me at all. I recollect telling you I would keep that packet always. Well, Gaston—I wish now I had never seen it. There is a drawer in my dressing-case I have not once since had courage to open."

Gaston Arbuthnot turned his head. Studying his wife's face closely, some suspicion of possible mistake began to dawn upon him.

"Are you certain as to your facts, Dinah? A drawer, you say, in your dressing-case which you never have found courage to open! And why not? I confess to being cut of my depth. Linda's gloves honestly lost by her, honestly paid, lay on the parlor mantel-shelf. Of this I am positive. From the mantel-shelf I naturally transferred them to my pocket."

"Gloves!"

"What else? You do not suppose poor Linda and I made bets of twenty-pound notes?"

"But the word she wrote for you—the flower, the ribbon. Ah, Gaston," cried Dinah, hurriedly, "let us never have another misunderstanding. I was wrong—criminal, if you choose—on opening a cover that was not directed to myself. But I suffered for my wrong-doing—you should know that—and you may be frank with me now. I am not so weak that you need hide a syllable of the truth."

"I put the gloves in my pocket," Gaston Arbuthnot reasserted, "and to the best of my remembrance wore them out in about a fortnight. They were iron-gray. A pair of iron-gray gloves would last one ten days or a fortnight, would they not?"

On this Dinah Arbuthnot started to her feet. She remembered Gaston's talent, of old, for calm mystification, and her heart fired.

"I have not re-opened the subject for amusement, Gaston. To show you that I would make amends in earnest, I will fetch the

packet this moment. I shall feel easier when it is in your keeping, to destroy or keep, as you choose."

Taking up a hand-lamp, Dinah passed into a neighboring chamber. When she returned, in three or four minutes' time, there was a pallor about her lips, a threatening of tears (the like of which during the past fifteen months had been happily absent) in her voice.

"Baby has moved—has she not! I thought I heard her from my room."

"The infant sneezed," answered Gaston Arbuthnot, with gravity. "Much to my terror. Sneezing might suggest waking. And to be alone with a waking baby recalls Dr. Johnson and the tower. Bring your wonderful packet here"—she had paused for a moment beside the child's cradle—"and let us have the scene out."

"We will never have a scene again while we live." Poor Dinah sunk into her former kneeling position; she rested her cheek against her husband's coat-sleeve. "Indeed, I think it might be fairer to you, more generous to Linda Thorne, to close the matter—thus."

She held the packet in the direction of the flames.

With a quick movement Gaston Arbuthnot's hand stayed her. He drew the contents forth from the envelope. He read Marjorie Bartrand's "one word." Then he glanced at the blackened flower-stalks, at the bit of tarnished Spanish ribbon.

"And could you believe—in the full possession of your reason, wife—that this was meant for me?"

Dinah's head drooped lower. She colored violently.

"Could you believe that Linda Thorne, a woman who has traveled over half the habitable globe alone, picking up experience everywhere—Linda, a woman of tact, a woman of the world—would commit herself to sentiment of doubtful application, set down in black and white?"

"I never stopped to reason—the heart within me was too sore. I knew Linda Thorne had called. I saw that the envelope was directed to you."

"Or to Geoffrey—which? It is, as you see, addressed simply 'Mr. G. Arbuthnot.'"

"But Mrs. Thorne and Geff disliked each other. Do you think, even in jest, she would—"

"My best Dinah—let a molehill which, during fifteen months, has been assuming gigantic size, return, forthwith, to molehill proportions! This handwriting may be Marjorie Bartrand's. One

can imagine a classico-mathematical girl making that kind of 'e.' It is certainly not Linda's."

"And the meaning of the solitary word, 'REPENTANCE!'"

"Ah! you must read your own riddles," answered Gaston, with suavity. "Poor Linda and myself made an innocent wager of gloves, which I won. I know no more."

Dinah rose hastily. She turned her face away from the fire's light. Amidst the full happiness of the last year, in her wifely rejoicing over Gaston's progress in his art, in the flood of charity toward all men which had come upon her with the new delights of motherhood, she had always dreaded the cloud "no bigger than a man's hand," had always remembered the secret which a jealously locked drawer of her dressing-case hid out of sight. Her moral attitude toward Gaston had perforce been a stooping one, an attitude of dumb forgiveness. Believing in the present, hoping all things for the future, it had not been possible for her wholly to forget the past. In this moment's sharp enlightenment, this unlooked-for vindication of Gaston's loyalty, her first sensation was one of relief. Succeeding it—so swiftly that Dinah distinguished not where relief ended and pain began—there swept across her the keenest shame which in her fair untarnished life her scul had ever known.

"You believe that the letter came from Marjorie Bartrand?"

The question fell from her lips almost unconsciously.

"One suspects the Greek 'e's,' and see—here, in this corner is the Bartrand crest, an eagle with a bad-tempered beak and upheld claw. Take back your own, wife, your cherished *vendetta*. I will have none of it."

"And you think she cared, really, for poor Geoff?"

"Marjorie was seventeen years old. The season of the year was June. They bent their heads together over the same school-room table. Even I—I, who have been so long out of the running, saw whither things tended as early as the rose-show. Geoff, no doubt, after a Platonic mode, admired the budding Girtton girl—a girl," said Gaston, narrow-mindedly, "far too pretty for her calling! There came a breeze between them—Geoffrey hinted as much to me the night before he left Guernsey—a threatening of storm which, if a certain letter had not been kidnapped, might have cost him his life, I mean his liberty, there and then."

By this time the blood had gone from Dinah's cheeks. "And all this was brought about through me, through my small, self-engrossed jealousy. Oh, Gaston, how sinful I was, how guilty I

am still! But for me, Geoffrey might long ago have come to happiness. He was our best friend always, and I betrayed him. I am the veriest wretch on earth."

Tears of repentance rushed to Dinah's eyes.

"You do not mention a slight reparation you owe to Linda Thorne," observed Gaston, with his shrewd smile. "You forget that something may be due also to me, even me, a husband."

"I was ill, body and mind, that miserable day. I had scarce had an hour's sleep since I came back from Langrune without you. A flimsy excuse," poor Dinah faltered, "and yet the only one I have to offer."

"It is the excuse in vogue. The big social scientists put just the same plea forward for the criminal classes. Crime is an illness. A man may run a knife into another simply because his digestion, reacting on the nerve centers, happened to be out of order. Probably, like you, my dear, the poor fellow had been suffering from insomnia! Such excuses," added Gaston, "are comforting enough for the man with the knife, but scarcely so consolatory to him stabbed."

Dinah touched the flower stalks wistfully. She folded the ribbon with care before returning it to the envelope. Her hands trembled in her excitement.

"You talk about reparation. I shall not let an hour be lost. I shall write to Miss Bartrand at once, send back her own letter, and confess—oh, Gaston, the hard word is yours—that 'twas I kidnapped it."

"You mean to perform this act of contrition for Geoffrey's sake?"

"I do."

"Poor Geff! After getting decently out of danger once (and his letters don't savor of a broken heart), it seems a trifle rough on him to have the thing revived."

"Poor Geff!" echoed Dinah, her eyes glistening through their tears. "You call a man poor who has a chance of winning Marjorie Bartrand's love? Does our happiness make you such an egotist,"—the reader will note that Dinah's vocabulary was enlarging—"such an egotist you do not care for other people to marry?"

"Or are you like the fox in the fable, my dear child—which?"

Dinah rested her clasped hands upon her husband's shoulder, and cogitated softly.

"Yes, I shall write to Tintajoux to-night. If it is not too late,

if the hearts of both are free, Miss Bartrand will find some way of letting Geoffrey know the truth."

"Of that you may be assured. If two women are to conspire together in league against him, I say 'poor Geff' with still more marked emphasis."

And rising, Gaston moved in the direction of the door. In these later days, in the confidence of established love, Dinah had thought it no grievance that her husband should join the Florentine Artists' Club, or spend a portion of every evening in other society than hers.

"Like all true women you are a remorseless match-maker," he told her. "Unless the flame between these two victims is clean burned out, you will contrive by your letter to rekindle it."

"I wish I were a better scribe—that I could put my heart between the lines! Oh, I must begin at once. Baby shall be left—for the first time—with old Giacinta, and I will run round to the Piazza, and post the letter myself."

"Five years hence, I hope Geoffrey will bless you for having written it. There was a flash of temper not to be forgotten in Margorie Bartrand's handsome eyes."

"And if there was! If a woman has a temper, even a jealous one, is it impossible for her husband's life to be happy?"

Dinah had followed Gaston to the door. She held up her face—the loveliest face in Florence, said the artists who worked therein—for his kiss.

"All men are not philosophers," Gaston Arbutnot made reply. "I have learned—tolerably dear the lesson cost me—not only to exist in a stormy atmosphere, but to flourish there."

And this is what Dinah wrote, not troubling herself over possible faults of syntax, not making a fair copy in the slanting pointed handwriting to which after much labor she had tediously attained. This is what Dinah wrote straight out from her heart—

"Florence, November 15.

"MY DEAR MISS BARTRAND,—I have just found, *with shame and remorse*, that I did you grievous wrong, last July twelvemonth. You were the kindest friend, save Geff, that ever I met, and I repaid you, little meaning it, with treachery. Perhaps when you see the *inclosed* you will guess what bitter confession I have got to make.

"Dear Miss Bartrand—I found your envelope on the mantel-piece of our parlor at Miller's Hotel, and I committed the meanest action of my life. I broke it open—and because I was blind with selfish trouble, and thought of my own suffering before all things, I kept the letter. I have had it in my possession till this hour.

"It would be poor excuse to say I mistook the *person* it was meant for, as well as the *hand* that wrote it. It would be cowardice to say my heart was too hot, too miserable to reason. I sinned, and if my sin has stood between my best friends and happiness, my punishment will last me my life.

"Unless I make too bold, may I hope, some future time, you will let Geoffrey read what I now write? Ask him to think of July the 1st, the day I went with him to Guernsey hospital. It was on that day, a quarter of an hour after Geoffrey left me, at the sight of *some one he will remember*, that I found your letter.

"Dear Miss Bartraud, I am the penitent and humble well-wisher of your happiness,

"DINAH."

The letter was directed to Tintajoux Manoir, Guernsey, and posted by the writer's hand on the night of November 15. A sharp Italian night, with the swollen Arno swirling, the moonlight lying in ebony and ivory patterns along the Florentine streets, with only one person—so it seemed to Dinah's beating heart—abroad in the sleeping city.

At the same hour Marjorie's eager eyes looked forth, through rain and fog, through the blurred obscurity of a Great Eastern carriage window, upon the lamps of Cambridge.

CHAPTER L.

HAPPINESS.

MADAME POUCHÉE'S house, the goal of the girl's journey, belonged to history; a thatched, lozenge-windowed structure, of which the pargeted gables, the black oak joints, and plaster panels abutted, with pathetically incongruous air, as of some aged spinster at a ball, on one of the brisk, modern thoroughfares of the town.

A brass plate engraved "*Pouchée*" was on the front door, conferring a semi-professional character upon the moldering household. Although the fencing-master, honest man, had lain for twenty years in *Père la Chaise*, and Madame Pouchée had no more ostensible livelihood than such small sums as mademoiselle gained by the teaching of her language, their plate raised them to the plane of citizens. The mother and daughter formed units in that curious gathering of poor French people which exists in our university towns, decayed families of fencing-masters, hair-dressers, or cooks, once prosperous, who shiver through English fog and

cold to the end of their existence because they are "dans leurs meubles," ratepayers!

To quit her dark old home, to forego the sound of Great St. Mary's curfew, to submit her furniture to the hammer of the auctioneer, would, to Madame Pouchée, have seemed little short of sacrilege. She passed her life with no larger pleasure than knitting, no acuter pain than rheumatism. She could go to mass on Sundays and festivals with more security in Cambridge than in France. Pouchée's foils and masks were suspended in the rattered entrance hall; Pouchée's portrait, as a glossy bachelor of twenty, with black frock-coat, turn-down collar, and gamboge gloves, hung in the salon. Upstairs, in one of the low-ceiled attics, were her crucifix and bénitier, just as she brought them from far Provence before her first child saw the light.

Such things to an aged woman are more than climate, more than nationality. Madame Pouchée's lot had not been rose-colored during the fencing-master's life. At the time of his death, even, monsieur was in Paris, led thither by some of the unexplained affairs which perennially drew him from his own fireside. But his widow clung to the foils and masks and portrait with as much patient fidelity as though he had loved her always. The careless husband who lay in Père la Chaise belonged to Madame Pouchée's middle age. The foils, the masks, the glossy bachelor with gamboge gloves and turn-down collar, were relics of her youth.

Every corner of the house was burnished to that vanishing point of cleanliness which only French housewives understand, on the evening of November 15. Ere Marjorie had well alighted from her cab, an unforgotten figure rushed forth through wet and darkness to meet her, a pair of kind solid arms held her fast.

"But you are tall—but you are fresh and vermeille!" Mademoiselle Pouchée hurried the girl across the strip of pavement to the house. "I see no more the little Cendrillon of old days. Come, then, mère, leave thy kitchen. Come, that I may present thee to our future Girton girl."

Madame Pouchée's cheeks were swarthy as the olives of her native country. An ample checked apron was tied round her neat black dress. She wore the provincial linen head-dress of her youth. Genuine French people do not shake hands on every occasion of human life, and fifty English years had left Madame Pouchée a genuine Frenchwoman still. The old lady came forward, not with a hand outstretched, but with such natural courtesy, such

charming welcome written on her Southern face as reminded Marjorie of Spain, and caused her somewhat flagging spirit to rally.

"I feel six years old again, dear Pouchée." This she said when mademoiselle had led her into the salon, a tiny paneled room where a table was cozily spread for a dinner of two before the fire. "Surely we had our lessons this morning! Surely I was wicked—when was I not wicked?—and you gave me a double row of spelling for my penitence."

Throughout the evening a mysterious sense of having gone back to her childhood fell balmily on Marjorie's heart. Madame Pouchée gave them a little dinner, as exquisitely cooked, I dare to say, as was any dinner in Trinity or Magdalen that night. For dessert were Tintajoux pears, of which a goodly hamper had come over as a present from the seigneur. Their coffee was served in Sèvres cups, dislodged for the occasion from Madame Pouchée's inlaid cabinet—the costliest ornament of the salon, brought with her in bridal days from Paris, when the nineteenth century was in its teens.

"It is like a Tintajoux holiday," cried Marjorie, as she and Pouchée sat, hand clasped in hand, beside the fire. "Do you remember every 29th of May we used to eat our dinner under the big oak in honor, you said, of le martyr Protestant, Charles?" The prayer-books in the Tintajoux family pew were of ancient date. Pouchée, honest creature, was wont to entangle herself among the various Stuart and Orange services, greatly to the seigneur's edification. "Ah, Pouchée, we are wiser now. We have learned history from loftier historians than Lady Calcott. And I, for one, am not happier."

"Whenever I look at Tintajoux I see a small Marjorie with temper, with eyes, with a determined Spanish face—and whom I loved much. There are no figures in the picture. Still, whenever I look at Tintajoux—"

Mademoiselle Pouchée's voluble tongue stopped abruptly.

"No figures in the picture?" Marjorie glanced round the empty walls. "And what picture are you talking of? Where is the photograph of the manoir I sent you last Christmas?"

As she spoke Madame Pouchée entered, bearing a fresh-trimmed lamp—for this little household boasted of no parlor-maid. The old Frenchwoman lingered awhile, her quick septuagenarian eyes watching the faces of her daughter and of their guest. She had caught Marjorie's last words.

"The photograph of Tintajoux Manoir? Why, it has been moved

upstairs. It hangs in the salon of our gentleman, notre bon locataire—pas vrai, ma fille?"

Mademoiselle Pouchée put the interruption quietly aside.

"Mère loses her memory. We must not always heed her," she observed to Marjorie presently. "In by-gone days, when the good papa was living, our family received undergraduates as lodgers. Mère has the old time in her heart still."

"Jesuitry, Pouchée! I remember your talents in that line. In by-gone days, when the good papa was living, no photograph of Tintajoux Manoir existed."

The remark was accompanied by a Bartrand look, as familiar, as smiling to poor Pouchée as though she and Marjorie had done battle over some delicate point of moral faithfulness that very morning.

"There are accidents—contingencies—nay, times being hard, there is necessity. As well confess the truth. We do not take lodgers." Pouchée's eyes dwelt fondly on the inlaid cabinet, the porcelain, the exquisite order of the little salon. "We are private citizens—rentières, living on our means."

"And there is no one in the house save yourselves?"

A flourish of Pouchée's fingers hinted negation. "The old place is, in fact, two houses, as you will see by daylight. There are rooms at the back that can be entered by a flight of open-air steps—steps dating from the fourteenth century, ma mie."

"You promised me truth—not history, mademoiselle."

"And by hazard—for the moment—we have a locataire. Not an undergraduate. We spare a room or two, on occasion, to some quiet gentleman—some resident M.A.—some student from the Art Schools. No undergraduate sets foot within our doors. *We are not licensed.*"

So keen a sense of distinction was conveyed by the italicized words that Marjorie forbore from further questioning. An hour later, however, when they were parting for the night in the fresh, chintz-draped attic which was the guest-chamber of the house, she ventured on a last surmise.

"As we passed a certain baize door at the turning of the stairs I smelled the smell of a pipe. Our bon locataire must live somewhere in that neighborhood, mademoiselle—our quiet gentleman, who is not an undergraduate, and who has the photograph of Tintajoux Manoir on his walls?"

But Pouchée was blankly uncommunicative. The gentleman went in and out by the other staircase. Marjorie would neither see nor

hear him during her stay in Cambridge. As to the photograph—it would certainly return to its place in the salon to-morrow morning.

"If you are afraid of University ghosts," added the Frenchwoman, as she bade her guest a final good-night, "you will do wisely to bolt your door. Sleep well, ma mie, and dream that we are making cowslip balls, as we used a dozen years ago, in the woods of Tintajoux."

The first five days of her Cambridge visit were resolutely spent by Marjorie in sight-seeing. It was well for her, she said, to come under the external influences of the Alma Mater, watch the cheerful flow of undergraduate life, look at Newnham and Girton from without, before delivering her letters of introduction. It was well for her, while she still stood uncommitted to the future, to run a last forlorn chance of meeting the man she loved!

Here was the truth, unrecognized, perhaps, as truth, even in Marjorie Bartrand's moments of sternest self-questioning. Day after day, however, slipped vainly by. A dozen times in each twenty-four hours her heart would leap, her pulses throb as men of Geoffrey's height or build went past her in the crowded streets. Geoffrey Arbuthnot appeared not. She fell to quarrelling with herself over her own folly. Geoffrey might be at the other side of the world—married—contented: in every case must have learned long ago, to live his life, to do his work without *her*. Happily, there were reprisals—

On the morning of the sixth day she determined to put her sweetheart away from her remembrance, forever.

"I have come to the end of my sight-seeing." This she told the Pouchées at breakfast. "I have heard a University sermon and the services at King's and Trinity. We have visited Trumpington church-yard and the Backs. I have seen Milton's tree and Gray's fire-escape, and—and the Girton girls playing tennis. When I have gone over your house, Madame Pouchée, when I know what kind of rooms reading gentlemen inhabit, my experience will be complete."

The speech fell from her idly. Small curiosity in the affairs of others was never a sin to be reckoned among the Bartrand qualities.

But Mademoiselle Pouchée's manner gave it purpose. Mademoiselle changed color, fidgeted with her coffee-spoon, contradicted herself. "The rooms were the plainest rooms in Cambridge. No knowing at what time our gentleman went out or might return. For herself, she seldom entered his part of the house, and—"

"Pouchée," exclaimed Marjorie, the old spirit of contradiction

taking possession of her, "there is a mystery about our excellent lodger which I mean to solve. You seldom enter his part of the house, you say? You were in his rooms last evening. I saw you enter through the baize door, as I have seen you do pretty often already. I heard your voice as you talked to him. Explain these things."

"Enfin! It would be better if the truth were told," said old Madame Pouchée in her own language. "Our gentleman is an enemy of the sex. What will you have! When he heard a young lady was coming to visit us—"

"He offered, of free will, to go in and out by the other stairs," interrupted Pouchée, adroitly. "He showed the finest, most delicate consideration. Since that first evening when Marjorie perceived his pipe our gentleman has not smoked. He goes out early. He does not return until he is worn out with work—such work as his is, too—at night!"

"Then it is impossible we can disturb him," exclaimed Marjorie, rising briskly from the table. "As a matter of architecture I am interested in the fourteenth-century stairs. The rooms they lead to must be equally curious. You need not chaperon me." She looked back at Pouchée across her shoulder. "I shall push back the mysterious red baize and walk straight into Bluebeard's chamber without knocking."

And running up the stairs, she was about to put her threat into execution when Pouchée, by a dexterous flank movement, cut off her advance.

"There may be a litter of papers. Grand ciel! there may be the bones, the skull." With her hands upon the lock Mademoiselle Pouchée barred Marjorie's progress by her own solid person; then, opening two inches of door, she peered in, cautiously. "No; we are in order. We have locked up our skeleton for once. You may enter, child—Barbebleue is not here to eat you."

Marjorie Bartrand stopped short upon the threshold. Something in the meagerly furnished room, the piles of books, the small fireless grate, the absence of any pretense at decoration or cheerfulness, affected her strongly. She shrunk from intruding, unbidden, on such valiantly borne poverty as was here in evidence before her.

"And you have robbed him of Tintajoux Manoir!" She glanced round at the bare, damp-stained walls. "Tintajoux at least gives one a notion of quick and wholesome air, of honest sunshine."

"Our gentleman robbed himself. When I told him the morning

after your arrival, that you had asked for it, he took the photograph from his wall with his own hand."

"And you can give him no other picture to fill its place?"

"He has a magnifique picture here, facing the window. See," Pouchée adjusted herself into a favorable light with an air of connoisseurship, "a magnifique portrait, just a little mildewed, of King William the Fourth. The fur on his majesty's cloak has been the admiration of many artists. Come in, ma mie, entrez. What are you afraid of?"

And Marjorie entered. She looked for a few seconds at the time-stained mezzotint which, with its black frame, its cheap glass, seemed but to make the wall whereon it hung more sorrowfully, ugly. Then she crossed to the room's one window—a diamond-lead casement through whose small dulled panes the side view of a crowded alley, of the corner of a still more crowded church-yard, was attainable.

A ponderous book lay on a chair beside the window. Marjorie Bartrand lifted it.

"Marjorie, I forbid you to touch a book! Our gentleman studies for medicine. Medical works are not for the perusal of young girls."

"The girl of the future peruses everything! Quain's 'Elements of Anatomy,' " cried Marjorie, holding the volume as high out of Pouchée's reach as its weight would allow. "I wonder whether our gentleman would lend it to us, if we asked him prettily? We might study our bones together, Pouchée. Who knows, in days to come, that I may not go for a Natural Science Tripos?"

And—with the book still held aloft—her nimble fingers found their way to the title-page. In the top right-hand corner was a name, written in characters she knew:

"GEOFFREY ARBUTHNOT, *January, 1880.*"

For an instant Marjorie Bartrand turned ashen pale. Then as she recalled her position, as she realized that she had forced herself, unasked, into Geoffrey Arbuthnot's room, the poor child crimsoned from throat to brow. She felt that the very soul within her had cause to blush over her temerity.

"Let us come away this moment. I am taken by surprise—there has been some cruel mistake."

The book almost fell out of her grasp. Swiftly as her limbs would carry her she made her way out of the room and down the stairs. Then, when they were safe again in the little salon, she caught Pouchée's hand with passion.

"I look to you, mademoiselle, for an explanation," she cried, with impetuous voice, with flaming eyes. "What right had you to conceal from me that Geoffrey Arbuthnot lived here?"

But Pouchée had the strength of conscious innocence. All further need of mystification was over now. Regarding their lodger as a shy recluse, an enemy of the sex, the two poor French ladies had striven with will to keep him and their visitor from meeting. This was the secret of their reticence, the sum of their offending. Mademoiselle Pouchée met Marjorie's lightning glance calmly.

"Mère and I had nothing to conceal. How could it have interested you to hear a stranger's name?"

"And you never spoke of me in his presence?"

"If we did, it was by hazard. Why should Marjorie Bartrand of Tintajoux be more than any other young lady to Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot?"

"Simply," returned Marjorie, closely watching Pouchée's unmoved face—"simply because Mr. Geoffrey Arbuthnot had the picture of Tintajoux hanging on his walls."

"By hazard, also, he took a fancy to the photograph from the first day he came to lodge with us. It had a look of Scotland—it recalled some place where he had known good times. And so, to give him pleasure, I said that while he lodged here, Tintajoux should hang above his chimney piece."

"From whence it was unhung, by his own hand, to please the caprice of an unknown visitor. Mr. Arbuthnot is very generous!"

"Mr. Arbuthnot," cried Pouchée, warming on the instant, "is the most noble hearted man living. Yes, and I have traveled! I have had my experiences widened. I know my world. That he should work hard at the hospital or over his books, I comprehend. A high degree is at stake. Men have their ambition. Mr. Arbuthnot goes into courts and alleys, vile places, left alone by the police, and where priests or parsons might get their throats cut. He searches out the worst outcasts in Barnwell and Chesterton, only to serve them."

"Now—at this present time?" stammered Marjorie, conscience-stricken.

"Now, while you and I, mon enfant, have been sight-seeing. His last protégé," went on Pouchée, "is a miserable bargeman, one of the worst characters on the river. This man was struck over the head by some falling timber two or three weeks ago. He was too nearly gone, so his mates thought, to be carried to the hospital, and our gentleman just saved his life. He has nursed him day and

night since, as one of your great London doctors would nurse a Prince of the Blood. If Mr. Arbuthnot were of our religion I could understand it. I visit in Barnwell myself a very little."

This was Pouchée's account of her own charities. She visited in Barnwell a great deal. Beside fever-stricken, dying pallets, her acquaintance with Geoffrey Arbuthnot had first begun.

"But we, Catholics, see in the poor our own sick soul. We hope, in saving them, to save ourselves."

"And Geoffrey Arbuthnot?"

"He serves them, gives them his time, his money—what do I know! his heart—simply *because* they are castaway men and women. 'Sisters and brothers in a queer disguise.' You should hear him say that, with his grave smile! It was to talk over some of these sisters and brothers, Marjorie, that I went to our gentleman's rooms, last night."

"Our gentleman ought to be a happy man," said Marjorie, with a sigh.

The Frenchwoman's shoulders were skeptically expressive.

"A hair-shirt is never worn for pleasure, child. It is not in nature that a man of six-and-twenty should care for other people's lives more than for his own. Geoffrey Arbuthnot might have made a good servant of the Church—an Ignatius Loyola, a Francis Xavier. But if one speaks about happiness—*allez!*"

CHAPTER LI.

FROM DINAH'S HAND.

THESE things sunk heavily on Marjorie's bruised heart. She felt that Geoffrey's indifference to herself was now an ascertained fact—nay, that his fancy for her, at no time worthy of a higher name, had turned to repugnance. He had asked her to be his wife under the glamour of a picturesque moment—a friendship, unique in its conditions from the beginning, suddenly taking upon itself a surface likeness to passion! A true lover would not have availed himself so readily of his chance of freedom, would not have magnified his mistress's heat of temper into a crime, would not have rejected the fullest amends that woman could offer, short of falling upon her knees in the dust before an offended sweetheart!

Mademoiselle Pouchée was overjoyed when the girl announced herself ready, next day, to deliver her letters of introduction.

"We shall see what such presentations lead to," exclaimed the kindly soul, her round face beaming. "A dinner here, a lunch there—the highest gentlemen in Cambridge to be met at each! I predict a *succès fou*! Not all the world, let me tell you, brings such letters to the University. By after to-morrow you will have every evening of your week engaged."

"The University will keep its head, dear Pouchée. A singularly insignificant young person from the Channel Islands runs no risk of becoming a sensation. The highest gentlemen in Cambridge will pay Marjorie Bartrand just attention enough to ask her name—and forget it."

Nevertheless, on the score of invitations, Pouchée's forecast proved a true one. Before night, arrived a friendly invitation bidding Marjorie to dine at the house of the Master of Matthias next day. As Miss Bartrand looked forward to studying in Cambridge, the note added, a lady high in authority at Girton had been asked to meet her.

"Of that Girton lady I speak not," observed Pouchée, when the hour came on the morrow for Marjorie to dress. "About Newnham and Girton I am dumb." Imagine Pouchée dumb on any subject, earthly or terrestrial! "I have lived by brain work, I have been a teacher over nineteen years. See my whitening hairs, my lost illusions, my disenchantments! In that sad trade the woman's heart breathes not. Make yourself charming, fillette! The most distinguished society of Cambridge is to be met with at the table of the Master of Matthias. For a child of eighteen there may be better things in store than coming out high in a Tripos; yes, or standing on a level with the first wrangler of them all."

Marjorie's presumptive triumphs caused the whole Pouchée household to expand. Wax candles—rare extravagance—stood, lit, before her mirror. Flowers were on her toilet-table. Her white dinner-dress, with its simple adjuncts, was lovingly laid ready for her by mademoiselle's hand.

But in Marjorie's restless heart there was no place for pretty dresses, for anticipation of social success. She drew aside her curtain! She gazed down through a chink of blind upon the street, hoping against hope, as she had so often done before, to discover the face of her false sweetheart among the passers-by.

It was the most crowded hour of the short November day. Athletic men were there, returning, in flannels and wrappers, from the river or the Piece; sporting men from the hunting-field; reading men from their trudge along the Wranglers' Walk. Of "piffers"

an abundance; men with terriers, men with button-holes, men in dog-carts—the whole many-colored undergraduate world, alert, self-engrossed. Drawing together the curtain, Marjorie Bartrand moved back to her looking-glass. She stood confronting the pale, serious-eyed vision that met her there with a kind of pity. She was so young, and the years to come were so many; disappointed years under whose weight she must stand upright, give no sign she winced beneath their burden, wear a brave countenance—work! She felt that she hated Cambridge, this ceaseless ebb and flow, this turmoil of exultant, successful, youthful life! Was not Tintajoux, with its dying woods, its still moorland, a fitter drop-scene for the little played-out drama of her personal happiness?

As Marjorie meditated, the sharp sound of the postman's knock made her start. No letter of more vital interest than a dispatch from the seigneur was likely to reach her; and yet her breath quickened. Her mood throughout the day had been one of feverish, unreasoning expectancy. Change, for good or for evil, was, she felt, in the air. Opening the door of her room, she listened with vague impatience. Hot controversies anent overweight and foreign postage were impending between Madame Pouchée and the postman; madame, in the matter of extra half-pence, standing stoutly on the defensive. After a time there would seem to be a reluctant payment of coin, followed by the brisk shutting of an outer door. Then the old Frenchwoman's slippered steps began leisurely to ascend the stair. The girl's breath came faster. She ran out on the landing. The letter was *not* the size or shape of the seigneur's letters, and it bore two postmarks: Florence, Guernsey—

"Five half pence over weight. I hope, mère, it may be worth its postage," observed Mademoiselle Pouchée, busily tying up violets in the salon for the adornment of Marjorie's dress. "The child has never spoken about Italy, still—her heart is somewhere, mère, and I don't believe that somewhere is in Newnham or Girton. Ah, when I, too, had eighteen summers, when—"

"Pouchée! Dear, good old Pouchée!" called out a voice, resonant, hearty, imperious, from the attic floor. "Leave the violets. Come upstairs, quick! I have had splendid news. Everything in the world is changed. You must send an excuse to the Master of Matthias at once."

In a moment the Pouchées, mother and daughter, were at the bottom of the stairs. Marjorie Bartrand, her opened letter in her hand, a flush of wild excitement lighting her face up into its vivid Southern beauty, stood on the landing above.

"An excuse! Consider what you talk about!", exclaimed Pouchée solemnly. "Have your splendid news, with all my heart! But have your splendid dinner, too. The Master of Matthias keeps the best table in the University. At his house you meet—"

"The most distinguished society of Cambridge. Oh, Pouchée, what should I find to say to distinguished society—to any king or emperor in Europe? Hark! There is Great St. Mary's clock striking the quarter. We have not a minute to lose. Write a note, mademoiselle, in your best hand, with your pretty, courteous French grace, and give it to the coachman to deliver. I must read my letter through once more."

Seven was the appointed time of the master's dinner-party. At the moment when Great St. Mary's clock boomed the hour's first stroke, Marjorie Bartrand extinguished her candles. She descended with muffled tread to the red baize door at the turning of the stairs. Here she paused, listened until she heard the shrill treble of French voices, knew that the Pouchées were safely talking together downstairs. Then, on tiptoe, she stole to Geoffrey's quarters. The door stood ajar; a stray reflected flare of gaslight from some shop window in the court beneath enabled her to grope her way across the chill and comfortless room.

The girl paused irresolute. She remembered Cassandra Tighe's story, remembered the miniature Bartrands, the confession made in their presence of Geoffrey Arbuthnot's first love. During a few seconds the old Bartrand pride swayed her—the happiness of her life hung by a thread. Then she took a packet from her breast. She laid it meekly, furtively, on the student's writing-table and fled, like one who quits the scene of a committed crime, to the light and cheerfulness of the little salon below.

Pouchée was decking the mantel-shelf with the violets Marjorie should have worn. "Headstrong as ever, child! But I forbear to reason," she cried, "until you explain yourself. That big Italian letter, redirected in the seigneur's hand, has brought you important news?"

"I will answer you to-morrow, Pouchée. All I know is that I have lost my chance of distinguished society, and that my heart is the happiest heart in all Cambridge."

"Grand ciel! Then you have a dear friend among the Florentines!" Poor Pouchée's face brimmed over with curiosity. "I accept him, without conditions, for your sake. The Italians are ungrateful as rats. Think of all my country has done for them! Still, if a Florentine is your fate—"

But her imaginary concessions were cut short; the violets slipped through Pouchée's fingers. There came the sudden click of a latch-key at the house door. A man's firm step sounded in the passage.

"It is our gentleman! Save yourself, quick, child! The curtains of the bay-window will hide you."

The words had scarce left Pouchée's mouth when Geff Arbuthnot entered. He took a rapid glance round him, walked in the direction of the window—Marjorie's heart thrilled as she crouched, imprisoned, out of sight—then stopped short. There was something of insecurity about his movements.

"For a moment I was afraid to come in. The front door has become strange to one. But you are really alone, mademoiselle? Your visitor has started to her party? Then you will let me have five minutes' chat beside your fire? I have something good to tell you."

"That is right, sir. Please let me set you a chair."

In performing this little action, Pouchée artfully chose such a point that Marjorie, shadowed herself, might gain a full view of Geff Arbuthnot's face.

"Your fire makes one feel we are in November."

He stretched his hands forth to the blaze. "How delightful your salon is to-night, Mademoiselle Pouchée."

Coming in from the mud and darkness, the dreary prose of Cambridge thoroughfares, he might well think so. The room was redolent with the odor of Marjorie's discarded violets; morsels of muslin embroidery, a thimble never worn by Pouchée's finger, lay on a work-table near Geff's elbow. The warmth, the grace, the nameless sweetness of a young girl's presense, were everywhere.

"How well that Guernsey photograph looks in its old place!" Could it be that Geoffrey shrunk from pronouncing the name of Tintajoux? "You shall not dismantle your walls again for whim of mine."

Pouchée stirred the fire into a keener flame. She gave a discreet little cough.

"We will settle about that another day, sir. I wait impatiently your news. Something good about yourself, I hope?"

"Something very good." His face brightened. "You know our poor patient down in Barnwell?"

"Our Irish bargee, O'Halloran, the dingiest character even Barnwell can show."

"But whom, when he was at his worst, Mademoiselle Pouchée tended like a sister."

"I sat up one or two nights. I helped—because the good-for-nothing is of my religion. Our priest advised an act of contrition. I had my motives."

"As I had mine," said Geoffrey. "Never condescend, mademoiselle, to become a motive-monger. Do you think no experimental zeal mingles with a medical student's attention to his pauper fellows?"

"O'Halloran rewards you, I trust, with gratitude. *That*, at least," observed Pouchée, with a touch of cynicism, "would be a new experience among *ces messieurs* of the gutters!"

"O'Halloran rewards me with gratitude. The bandages were off him this afternoon for the first time, as you know. Well, he was sitting, propped up in bed, looking at my face with such poor remnant of sight as remains to him, when suddenly—'Doctor! I'm darned,' he cried in his hollow voice, 'if it be 'ant my Varsity man, after all!'"

"Modestly spoken! His Varsity man, indeed!"

"I should have thought the fever had come back," said Geff, "if I had not had my finger on his pulse two minutes before. 'Your Varsity man, Mike—what are you talking about?' I asked him. 'What have you to do with the University or its men?' 'I had to do,' he said, 'with a Varsity man one accursed November night that *you* must remember, doctor. There was a lot of chaps together, rough river chaps—you know the sort, sir—and three or four of the Varsity gentlemen come across 'em, down Petty Cury. The gentlemen wasn't of the fighting kind, so far as I can recollect, but anyways they got into a Town and Gown row—a bad one—Doctor, I say—the poor fellow put out his big, weak hand to me—'I was the leader of the roughs. I struck a foul coward's blow when the gentlemen was fighting honorable and unarmed. It was me give you the devil's mark you'll take with you into the coffin.'"

"Scélérat—miserable!" put in Pouchée, between her closed teeth.

"I tried to joke him out of his fancy," went on Geff Arbutnot, "but in vain. Mike had seen my face, before he struck the blow—and afterward. He had never forgotten me. The scar which you, mademoiselle, have lamented over, as marring my beauty, put my identification beyond doubt. 'My Varsity man—my Varsity man,' he moaned. 'I've thought of him many a time in the black years since. And now, at last, I've found him. Doctor, you've

saved my life—you've looked after me when I should have died, else, like a dog on this miserable floor, here—there's one favor more I durstn't, no, I durstn't ask of you. Give me your hand in token of forgiveness."

"And you gave it him," cried Pouchée, whose face had turned a queer shade of color as she listened.

"I gave him my hand, and Mike, who I suspect has cared neither for God nor man in his life, caught it to his lips. My dear mademoiselle, you can guess that it was a good moment. To pull one's patient round, in body, is much. O'Halloran will have a human heart in that dark breast of his from to-day forth."

And having told his story, Geff Arbuthnot rose. With a lingering look he took in the home-like suggestiveness of the little salon, the violets on the mantel-shelf, the morsel of embroidery, the slender implements of needle-work on the table. Then, he bade Mademoiselle Pouchée good-night. Marjorie listened while his remembered step ran up the stairs, listened until she knew by the cpening and shutting of a distant door that he had gained his study. Then she crept forth, uncertain of mien, from her hiding-place.

"Have I committed a dishonorable action? Was there anything I should not have heard? Oh, mademoiselle," she went on, incoherently, "is not Geoffrey Arbuthnot the noblest man in the whole world?"

And Marjorie clasped the mantel-shelf, steadying herself thereby. She bent down over a cup of violets, hiding the face from which she felt all trace of color must have vanished.

"You look tired, ma mie. The news from Florence has not brought back your roses. Now, what shall I get for you?" cried Pouchée, stealing a kind arm round the girl's shoulder. "Thanks to your Italian letter, remember, you have been cheated out of dinner."

"I should like some tea," Marjorie answered, plausibly. "Tea and a plate of tartines, cut after the fashion that only you, dear Pouchée, understand."

If the flattery were a trick of war to effect the Frenchwoman's absence, I hold that, in a moment supreme as this, it was pardonable.

Off went Pouchée to the kitchen, unsuspecting to the last of the love story in which she had played a part, and Marjorie, her heart on fire, awaited her fate. For the first two or three minutes all was quiet. Then she heard the impetuous opening of Geoffrey Arbuthnot's door. Her limbs well-nigh failed her, her spirit sunk.

Through a few seconds of suspense the past fifteen months seemed to unroll themselves, one by one, before her sight. At last the salon door opened and closed. Marjorie moved a step forward—she held out a hand that trembled violently. A moment more and strong arms held her close, her blushes were hidden on Geff Arbuthnot's breast.

There was a long space of silence, an interchange of such words, such broken attempts at explanation as pen and ink can ill put into form. Then Geoffrey led his sweetheart into the broader light of lamp and fire. He looked at her tall figure, her altered softened face, with wondering eyes.

"You have grown several inches, Miss Bartrand. You have become beautiful. Tell me I am not asleep—dreaming, as I have done so often—that I hold your hand. Tell me my good luck is real!"

"Don't talk of good luck, yet. I have not lost my Bartrand temper. Plenty of bad times may be in store for both of us."

"And when was this sent to me?" Geoffrey touched his breast-pocket, in token that Marjorie's ribbon and letter lay there. "The address is an enigma. There is a faded look I can not interpret about the handwriting."

"I left the packet fifteen months ago at your hotel in Guernsey." The girl's face drooped. "You ought to have had it on the day after—after my vile temper drove you away from Tintajoux. I wrote—one word—as you wished; I sent you the bit of Spanish ribbon for a book-marker. But fortune was against me. I forgot that you and your cousin Gaston had the same initial."

"If Gaston had opened a letter wrongly he would have brought it to me on the spot."

"There was mistake within mistake—at that time poor Dinah's heart was near to breaking—so she writes me now."

"Dinah! You have heard from Mrs. Arbuthnot? Let me see her explanation."

"I will read a passage or two aloud." Marjorie Bartrand drew the Italian letter from her pocket.

"No. You will let me read every word of it for myself."

And Geoffrey Arbuthnot took the letter, unfolded, and read it through.

"Dinah was tried beyond her strength," said Marjorie, instinctively deciphering a pained expression on Geoffrey's face. "But she has no need to feel so contrite. It will make our happiness

doubly sweet to know it has come to us, in the end, from Dinah's hand."

The tone, the generous words, smote Geoffrey to the quick.

"Can you give up everything for me?" he asked her presently. "Your dream for years has been Girton. Do you desire still to become a Girton student, or—?"

"I desire that you shall guide me," was the prompt answer. "I need no other life, no other wisdom, no other ambition than yours."

A *finis* commonplace as daylight, reader, old as the foundation of the Gogmagog Hills. Gaston's prediction was verified—Marjorie Bartrand had proved herself a very woman after all.

THE END.

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